Translating the Bible

June 9, 2024

Harvesters
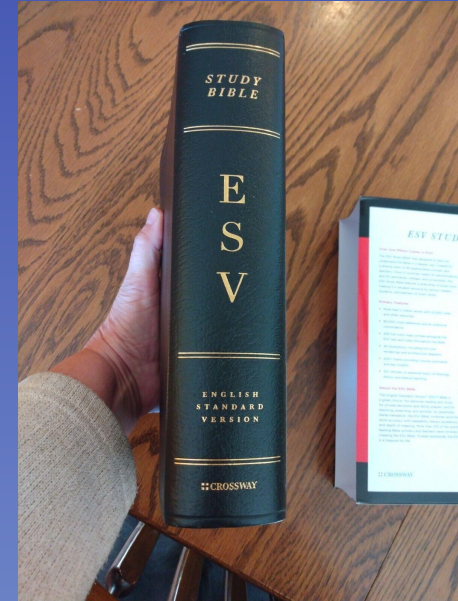
How do we get…

from here

to here?

Bible translation

Translating the Bible

Will cover:
- What is Bible translation?
- Factors in translating the Bible

Purpose:
- Have a greater appreciation of what is involved in Bible translation
- Have a deeper understanding of the Bible

Translating the Bible

Translating the Bible is a huge topic and touches many other areas.

Will not cover:
- History of Bible translating
- Biblical authorship
- Inspiration
- Textual criticism
- Bible transmission
- Canonicity
- Reliability of the Bible

What is Bible translation?

"the art and practice of rendering the Bible into languages other than those in which it was originally written."
Britannica.com

Source language ⟶ **Target language**

Βίβλος ⟶ **Bible**

What languages was the Bible written in?

Old Testament - Hebrew, some Aramaic

מִזְמֹור לְדָוֵד יְהוָה רֹעִי לֹא אֶחְסָר׃

New Testament - Greek, some Aramaic

Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν Υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ᾽ ἔχῃ ζωὴν αἰώνιον

What affects Bible translation?

- Translation methodology - formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, paraphrase
- Source text
- Target audience
- Base English text
- Semantic range
- Idioms
- Euphemisms
- Hapax Legomenon
- And other factors

Formal vs dynamic equivalence

Eugene Nida (1914-2011) coined the terms formal and dynamic equivalence.

Formal equivalence	Dynamic equivalence
Word-for-word	Thought-for-thought
Favors source language	Favors target language
Favors readers interpreting	Favors translaters interpreting
More literal, less readable	Less literal, more readable
Complete equivalence	Functional equivalence

Interlinear		Formal equivalence	Dynamic equivalence		Paraphrase
Interlinear	YLT	KJV	NIV	NLT	TLB
		ASV	HCSB	GNV	MSG
		RSV	CSB	NET	TPT
		NASB			
		ESV			

WORD-FOR-WORD
Formal Equivalence

MEANING-FOR-MEANING
Closest Natural Equivalence

THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT
Functional Equivalence

PARAPHRASE
Retelling

NASB   **ESV**   **KJV**   **NKJV**   **TRB**   **GW**   **CSB**   **NIV**   **NLT**   **NIRV**   **CEV**   **MSG**

CSB Christian Standard Bible	**KJV** King James Version	**NIV** New International Version	
CEV Contemporary English Version	**MSG** The Message	**NKJV** New King James Version	
ESV English Standard Version	**NASB** New American Standard Bible	**NLT** New Living Translation	
GW GOD'S WORD Translation	**NIRV** New International Reader's Version	**TRB** The Readable Bible	

What is interlinear?

1722 [e]	746 [e]	1510 [e]	3588 [e]	3056 [e]		2532 [e]	3588 [e]	3056 [e]	1510 [e]	4314 [e]	3588 [e]	2316 [e]	2532 [e]
En	archē	ēn	ho	Logos		kai	ho	Logos	ēn	pros	ton	Theon	kai
Ἐν	ἀρχῇ	ἦν	ὁ	Λόγος	,	καὶ	ὁ	Λόγος	ἦν	πρὸς	τὸν	Θεόν	, καὶ
In [the]	beginning	was	the	Word		and	the	Word	was	with	-	God	and
Prep	N-DFS	V-IIA-3S	Art-NMS	N-NMS		Conj	Art-NMS	N-NMS	V-IIA-3S	Prep	Art-AMS	N-AMS	Conj

1 (verse number)

2316 [e]	1510 [e]	3588 [e]	3056 [e]
Theos	ēn	ho	Logos
Θεὸς	ἦν	ὁ	Λόγος .
God	was	the	Word
N-NMS	V-IIA-3S	Art-NMS	N-NMS

¶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

INTERLINEAR | BIBLES | CROSS-REFS | COMMENTARIES | DICTIONARIES | MISC | x

TEXTUS RECEPTUS

1:1 Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος

| Forward | **Reverse** | Fwd Inline | Rev Inline |

English (KJV) [?]	Strong's	Inflected, Root & Transliterated		Parsing
In	G1722	Ἐν ἐν en	🔊	PREP
the beginning PHRASE	G746	ἀρχῇ ἀρχή archē	🔊	N-DSF
was	G2258	ἦν ἦν ēn	🔊	V-IXI-3S
the	G3588	ὁ ὁ	🔊	T-NSM

Examples of formal, dynamic, paraphrase - 1 Peter 1:13

Formal equivalence:

KJV - Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind

ASV - Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind

Dynamic equivalence:

NASB - Therefore, prepare your minds for action

NIV - Therefore, preparing your minds for action

Paraphrase:

AMP - So brace up your minds

MSG - So roll up your sleeves, put your mind in gear

Source text

Which source text to use?

Since we don't have the original text of either the Old or New
Testaments, what text should we translate from?

Old Testament source text

Should we use the oldest Hebrew text?

"The Masoretic Text (MT) is the authoritative Hebrew and Aramaic text of the 24 books of the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) in Rabbinic Judaism."

However, the oldest known complete copy, the Leningrad Codex, dates from the early 11th century.

Old Testament source text

Should we use the oldest Old Testament text?

"The Septuagint, sometimes referred to as the Greek Old Testament, and often abbreviated as LXX, is the earliest extant Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible from the original Hebrew."

Fragments from 1st and 2nd century BC. Relatively complete LXX in 4th century and 5th century AD.

Septuagint used by NT authors

Around 90 times direct quotation from LXX. Around 80 times slightly altered quotation from LXX. Around 90 times quote from Masoretic.

Old Testament translations

Masoretic	Septuagint
KJV NKJV ESV NIV NASB CSB NAB NJB etc	Orthodox Study Bible Septuagint Bible

New Testament source text

Two major Greek sources:
- Textus Receptus (TR), Received Text
- Critical Text (CT)

Textus Receptus

"Textus Receptus (Latin: "received text") refers to the succession of printed editions of the Greek New Testament from Erasmus's Novum Instrumentum omne (1516) to the 1633 Elzevir edition."

TR is primarily based on the Byzantine text type (Majority Text).

Critical Text

"The critical text is an eclectic text compiled by a committee that compares readings from a large number of manuscripts in order to determine which reading is most likely to be closest to the original."

CT is primarily based on the Alexandrian text type, which is considered the earliest.

New Testament translations

TR	CT
KJV	ASV
NKJV	DRA
Modern English Version	ESV
Literal Standard Version	HCS
Tyndale	NET
Geneva	NIV
YLT	NAB
	NASB
	RSV

Passages in the TR not in the CT

Mark 16:9-20 - Long ending of Mark

John 7:53 - 8:11 - Woman caught in adultery

Verses in the TR not in the CT

Examples:

Mat 17:21 - Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Mat 18:11 - For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Mat 23:14 - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

Mar 11:26 - But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Base English text

- Great Bible - Tyndale Bible
- Geneva Bible - Tyndale Bible
- Bishops Bible - based on Great Bible, Geneva Bible
- KJV - based on Bishops Bible, Geneva Bible
- Revised Version - based on KJV
- American Standard Version - based on RV
- Bibles based on ASV:
  - RSV
  - Amplified
  - NASB
  - World English Bible

ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Target audience

- Evangelical Christians (NASB, ESV, NIV)
- Scholars (NRSV)
- Children (NIRV)
- New Christians (NLT, MSG, Amplified)
- Catholics (NABRE)
- Jehovah's Witness (NWT)
- Messianic Jews (New Jerusalem Version)
- Gen Z (Gen Z Bible)
- Southerners (Cotton Patch Version)

Gen Z Bible

John 3:1-2
So there was this Pharisee dude named Nicodemus, he was like a big shot ruler among the Jewish peeps:
So this guy came up to Jesus at night and was like, 'Hey, Rabbi, we know you're legit. You must be a teacher sent by God cause nobody can pull off these mind-blowing miracles unless God's got their back.'

Cotton Patch Version

Matthew 3:4-6
This guy John was dressed in blue jeans and a leather jacket, and he was living on corn bread and collard greens. Folks were coming to him from Atlanta and all over north Georgia and the backwater of the Chattahoochee. And as they owned up to their crooked ways, he dipped them in the Chattahoochee.

Clarence Jordan - founder of Koinonia farm which influenced Millard Fuller to start Habitat for Humanity.

Semantic range

"Semantic range is the range of meanings a word has, or the things it represents, and how it's used by speakers of a language at a given time."

It's rare to find a target word that matches the exact same semantic range as the source word. So, need to find the best target word that is close to the meaning of the source word.

Semantic range example - "see"

perceive by the eye - I see you.

be aware of - I see your point.

to make sure - See that you do what I say.

attend as a spectator - Want to see a movie?

courtship, dating - They have been seeing each other for a year.

make an equal bet - I see you and raise 10.

a seat of a bishop - the Holy See

Doulos - δοῦλος - G1401

Doulos has a large semantic range:

- slave
- bond-servant
- servant
- man of servile condition

In the KJV, it is translated servant (120x), bond (6x), bondman (1x). It is never translated slave in the KJV.

Romans 1:1

HCSB - Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus

LEB - Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus

NABRE - Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus,

NET - From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus

MSG - I, Paul, am a devoted slave of Jesus Christ

ESV - Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus

KJV - Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ

NIV - Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus

NASB - Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus

TPT - Paul, a loving and loyal servant of the Anointed One, Jesus.

shema - שָׁמַע - H8085

Shema has a large semantic range:

- hear
- understand
- obey
- obedient
- diligent

In Hebrew, there is no separate word for hear and obey. So, there is no English word that fully captures shema.

shema

Deut 6:4-5 - Hear (shema), O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Gen 22:18 - and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed (shema) my voice.

kaved - כָּבֵד - H3513

- honor
- glorify
- heavy
- harden
- promote
- burden

Exodus 8:32

Almost all translations translate as hardened:

KJV - And Pharaoh hardened (kaved) his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.
NASB - But Pharaoh hardened (kaved) his heart this time also,
ESV - But Pharaoh hardened (kaved) his heart this time also
NIV - But this time also Pharaoh hardened (kaved) his heart

With full semantic range:

But Pharaoh (honored, glorified, made heavy, hardened, promoted, burdened) his heart.

Idioms

"a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words."

- rain cats and dogs
- spilled the beans
- break a leg
- knock on wood
- hang in there

Deut 20:8 - heart melt

ESV - And the officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'Is there any man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house, lest he make the heart of his fellows melt (G4549) like his own.'

KJV - let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

NET - He may go home so that he will not make his fellow soldier's heart as fearful as his own.

NIV - Let him go home so that his fellow soldiers will not become disheartened too.

More idioms from the Bible

Psalm 17:8 - Keep me as the apple of the eye

Isa 40:15 - Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket

Job 9:18 - He will not allow me to catch my breath

Job 19:20 - By the skin of my teeth

2 Corinthians 12:7 - a thorn was given me in the flesh

1 Thessalonians 1:3 - labor of love

Matthew 5:39 - Turn the other cheek

Euphemisms

"the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant."

Ezek 16:26

KJV - Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbors, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger.

NASB - You also committed prostitution with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, and multiplied your obscene practice to provoke Me to anger.

ESV - You also played the whore with the Egyptians, your lustful neighbors, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger.

NIV - You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your neighbors with large genitals, and aroused my anger with your increasing promiscuity.

CSB - You engaged in promiscuous acts with Egyptian men, your well-endowed neighbors, and increased your prostitution to anger me.

Hapax Legomenon

"a word or an expression that occurs only once within a context"

Hapax legomena in ancient texts are usually difficult to decipher, since it is easier to infer meaning from multiple contexts than from just one.

Approximately 3,414 words which appear only once in the Bible, nearly 25% of the total vocabulary.

Hapax Legomenon

Isaiah 34:15 - qipoz

2001 - There, hedgehogs too, will build their nests
ASV - There shall the dart-snake make her nest
NASB - The tree snake will make its nest
CSB - Sand partridges will make their nests there
ESV - There the owl nests
NIV - The owl will nest there
KJV - There shall the great owl make her nest,
NABRE - There the hoot owl shall nest

Hapax Legomenon

Col 2:5 - stereōma (firmament)

KJV - stedfastness of your faith in Christ

NLT - your faith in Christ is strong

NIV - how firm your faith in Christ is

ESV - firmness of your faith in Christ

NASB - the stability of your faith in Christ

BBE - your unchanging faith in Christ

CSB - the strength of your faith in Christ.

MSG - the solid substance of your faith in Christ

Hapax Legomenon

Gen 1:7 - stereōma (firmament)

KJV - And God made the firmament
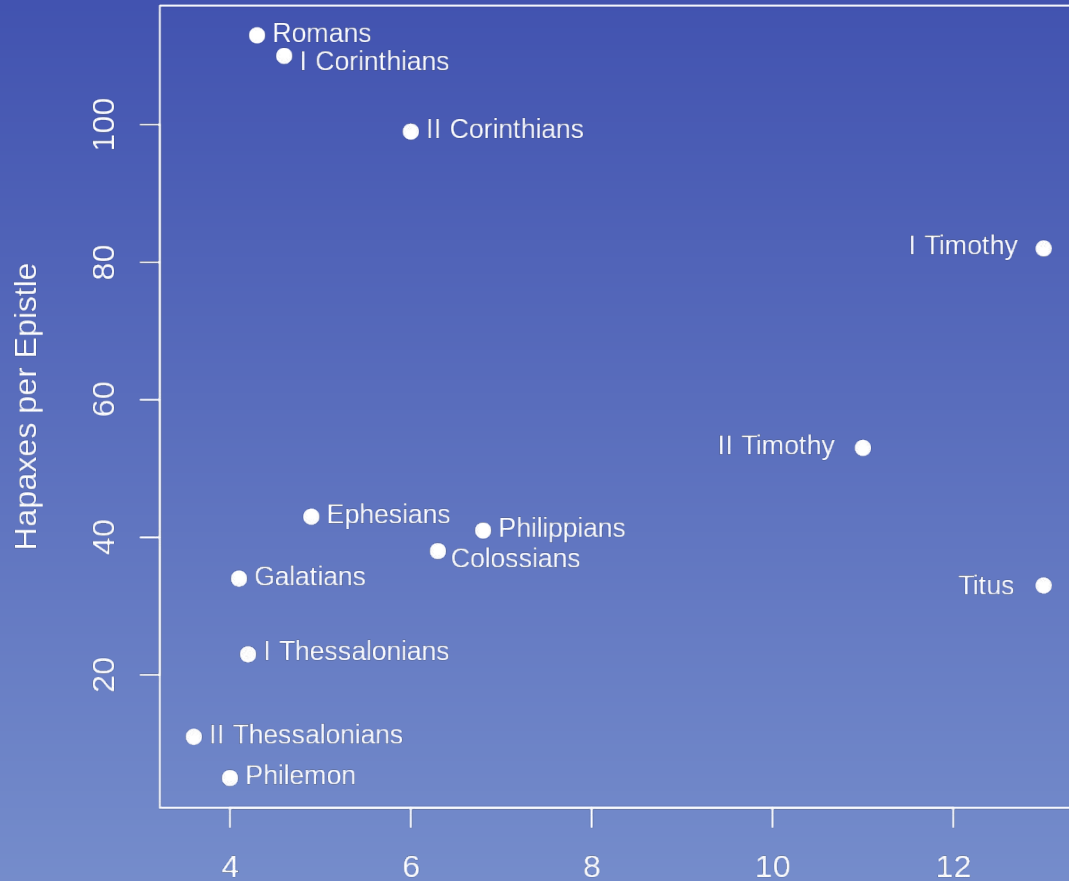ESV - And God made the expanse
NIV - So God made the vault
NASB - God made the expanse
ERV - And God made the space
NRSV - So God made the dome

W.P. Workman's Count of Hapax Legomena in NT Epistles

All translations are approximations

Because of translation methodology, semantic range differences, idioms, euphemisms, source text, target audience, and many other factors, no single Bible translation can fully capture the meaning of the original languages.

All Bible translations are approximations of the original languages.

Review

- What is Bible translation?
- Factors dealing with translating the Bible:
  - Translation methodology
  - Source text
  - Target audience
  - Base English text
  - Semantic range
  - Idioms
  - Euphemisms
  - Hapax Legomenon

Other factors in translating

- Committee vs individual
- Cultural issues
- Gender neutrality
- Word order
- Rhetorical devices (acrostics)
- Punctuations
- Alliterations
- Grammar limitations
- And others…

How to have a deeper understanding of the Bible

1. Understand all Bible translations have limitations
2. Read multiple translations
3. Look into the original languages
   a. Interlinear Bible
   b. Bible with Strong's numbers
   c. Software tools
4. Learn Greek and Hebrew
5. Transliteral Bible

Transliteral Bible

Next week, I'll talk about the Transliteral Bible. It's an attempt to get as close as possible to the original languages without having to learn the Hebrew and Greek alphabet and grammar.

How to get the Transliteral Bible

The Kindle New Testament is available on the Amazon Kindle store for $3.00.

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0CSXS5C81

Next Sunday, June 16, it will be free on Kindle.

Transliteral Bible: New Testament Kindle Edition

by Oliver Tseng (Author) | Format: Kindle Edition

See all formats and editions

The Transliteral Bible (TRLIT) is an English translation of the Bible that transliterates key words in the King James Version text. It allows readers to be able to read the Bible in a format closer to the original languages.

Purpose:

- To read the Bible in the original languages without the need to learn the Hebrew and Greek alphabets and grammar.
- To assist in learning Hebrew and Greek by focusing first on vocabulary instead of grammar.
- To read in a closer format to how the Bible was originally written.
- To have a deeper and richer understanding of the Bible.

Contents:

- New Testament Parallel Bible of KJV and TRLIT with Strong's numbers

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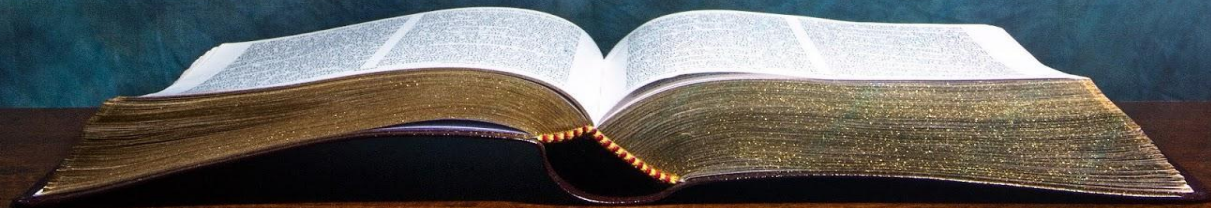## Buy for others

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What is the best translation?

Who is your favorite child?

I think all translations are valuable and useful, whether they be a formal, dynamic, or paraphrase Bible. They all give a perspective on the original text.

But to truly understand the Bible, we need to study the Bible in the original languages.

How many English Bible translations are there?

More than 100 complete Bibles.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_English_Bible_translations

http://bibles.wikidot.com/indexpage