

1 - Textual History - Some major movements and connections

- Hebrew ► Greek •

Septuagint [LXX] 250 BC

This is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. It has a long and complex history, taking over a century to come to its final form.

There is a **Letter of Aristeas**, a Greek official of the Egyptian court, who records that the LXX resulted from the initiative of Ptolemy II Philadelphus [285-246 BC]. He says that Jewish scholars were sent from Jerusalem at the request of the king.

- Greek ► Greek [revised] •

Theodotion's 190 AD Revision

A revision of the Greek text of the Old Testament was made by this man. It is not clear which text underlay his work. Was it the LXX or some other?

4th Century BC

Text of Samuel/Kings and also Jeremiah established by the Qumran Palestinian text

- Hebrew ► Greek •

Aquila's Version 130 AD

A convert to Judaism from Pontus in Asia Minor, Aquila translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek under the watchful eyes of Rabbi Akiba. Little has survived of this very literal and slavish text. Fragments of it are found in Origen's Hexapla.

- Hebrew ► Greek •

Symmachus' Translation 190 AD

With elegant work, this man, of unknown origin made a translation of the Greek text of the Old Testament, making use of the work of those who had gone before him. It is largely lost, although Jerome made use of it in his Vulgate and also there are fragments of it in Origen's Hexapla.

- Hebrew & Greek texts compared •

Origen's Hexapla 220-240 AD

Origen of Alexandria, and later of Caesarea, began a textual-critical study of the entire Old Testament in Hebrew and several Greek translations. His Hexapla, which must have taken many years, was lodged in the library of Pamphilus at Caesarea and consulted by many patristic scholars until the 7th Century AD when it was destroyed in the Islamic conquest. Today, only fragments remain.

He had six versions:

1. The Hebrew text of the Old Testament
2. A Greek text in parallel to it
3. Aquila's version
4. Symmachus' Greek version
5. The LXX – Septuagint; edited on the basis of the Hebrew
6. Theodotion's LXX translation

- Hebrew ► Aramaic •

Aramaic Targums [translations]

During the 5th and 6th centuries BC, Aramaic was the official language of the Persian empire. Translations were made of the Torah and the prophetic lectionaries [portions to be read in worship] into Aramaic. There are several.

The **Babylonian Targum**, a.k.a. as **Onkelos** after its supposed author, is Palestinian in origin, but was taken to Babylonia where it became authoritative. A long time afterwards, later than 9th century AD, it was returned to Palestine and ousted its rivals. It is literal in form and records rabbinic exegesis.

- Greek texts harmonised •

Diatessaron 160-175 AD

Tatian was a Syrian from Mesopotamia, who had studied with Justin Martyr at Rome. Justin often quoted a harmony of the Gospels. Tatian produced a **harmony of the four Gospels**, omitting very little he wove the four Gospels into a single story. It became very popular, and was still being used in the 5th Century AD when Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus on the Euphrates in 423 AD states that there were many copies in his diocese. Tatian later became heretical, and many of his copies of the Diatessaron were destroyed.

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Coptic Versions 390-420 AD

The non Greek-speaking peasants of Egypt, having become Christians, needed a translation of the Scriptures into their native tongue. These translations were based on the Greek Bible and are similar to the Old Latin Versions.

Coptic is the late form of the Egyptian language; which until Christian times was written in hieroglyphs and their two derivatives – hieratic and demotic script. In the first century, the language came to be written in Greek uncials, with the addition of seven characters for the demotic script.

At the time of the Christian evangelism, the old Egyptian language had about 6 dialects in use throughout Egypt. Two are important for the early versions of the Bible.

[a] In Upper Egypt, from Thebes to the South – the **Sahidic** dialect. About the 3rd Century AD, portions of the NT were in this dialect and by 4th century the whole NT. [It agrees generally with the “Alexandrian” form of text, although in the Gospels and Acts there are many “Western” readings.]

[b] In the Lower Egypt, the delta – the **Bohairic** dialect was used alongside Greek. NT texts appearing later than Sahidic, have an affinity to the Alexandrian text.

Coptic lacks the passive voice in the verb, and so there has to be the use of a circumlocution. The testimony of these versions is, in some sense then, ambiguous.

The construction of the genealogy of these versions is also difficult, for the translations were made in circumstances that are hard to get at.

Syriac Versions 4th to the 6th Century AD

Scholars recognise five different Syriac versions of all or part of the NT.

[1] Old Syriac - a “Western” type of text

[2] Peshitta [common version]

[3] Philoxenian

[4] Harclean

[5] Palestinian Syriac

[1] Old Syriac – Syr^w and Syr^p

Is preserved today in two mss of the four Gospels; although both of them have large omissions.

[a] a 4th Century AD mss - Syr^w edited by William Cureton in 1858

[b] a 5th Century AD mss - Syr^p a palimpsest discovered by Mrs. Agnes Smith Lewis in St Catherine's Monastery at the base of Sinai in 1892.

In both cases the form of the text takes us back to the 2nd or the beginning of the 3rd Century.

[2] Peshitta or the Syriac Vulgate [common version] - Syr^p Prepared about the 5th Century AD to replace the Old Syriac translations. It contains the whole NT excluding 2 Peter, 2&3 John, Jude and Rev. The text of the Peshitta has been transmitted with remarkable fidelity. There are 350 mss of the Peshitta dating from the 5th and 6th Centuries AD.

In the Gospels it is closer to the Byzantine style of text, but in the Acts to the Western.

[3] & [4] Philoxenian and/or Harclean versions – Syr^{ph} and Syr^h

The Syriac version, made in 508 AD for Philoxenus, bp of Mabbug, was re-issued in 616 by Thomas of Harkel, bp of Mabbug. The issue here is, “are there two versions or just one which was republished with marginal corrections?” The Harclean critical apparatus of the Acts is the second most important witness, after the Codex Bezae D[05], to the Western text.

[5] Palestinian Syriac version – Syr^{pal}

This is a quite independent version from the other Syriac versions noted here. The translation into Christian Palestinian Syriac [Aramaic], from lectionaries which are dated 11th - 12th Centuries takes us back to a text which is 5th Century of the Caesarean Type.

Latin Versions 4th to the 6th Century AD

Scholars dispute when and where the Bible was first translated into Latin. But most would think of it happening in North Africa around the date 175-200 AD where, at that time, Carthage was embracing Roman culture.

[1] Old Latin versions – 3rd Century – a, b, c etc

Circulated in North Africa and Europe, with distinctive versions for Italy, Gaul and Spain. We have the Gospels in 32 mutilated mss, 12 of the Acts, 4 of Pauline letters and fragments of Revelation.

The Old Latin versions are designated in the apparatus by the lower case of the Latin alphabet

[i] African Old Latin 5th Century

[a] e – Codex Palatinus, 4 Gospels, strong European emphasis

[b] h – Fleury palimpsest, ¼ of the Acts Catholic epistles and Rev. Has many scribal errors.

[c] k – Codex Bobbiensis, ½ of Matthew and Mark copies about 400 AD and taken to Irish monastery of Bobbio in North Italy. Agrees closely with quotations made by Cyprian of Carthage [AD 250]. Also contains the intermediate ending of the Gospel of Mark.

[ii] European Old Latin

[a] a – Codex Vercellensis, supposed to be written by Eusebius, bp of Vercelli in 371. Next to k, it is the most important Old Latin mss of the Gospels

[b] b – Codex Veronensis – the whole of the 4 Gospels

[c] c – Codex Colbertinus written in 12th century

[d] d – Codex Bezae [D], is a Greek/Latin bi-lingual text, 5th or 6th century. Since it occasionally agrees with readings of k and a when all other authorities differ, it witnesses to a text around no later than 250 AD.

[2] Latin Vulgate – post 320 AD
See the history of this version

Gothic Versions 450 AD

When **Ulfilas** was called to be the apostle to the Goths, he translated the Bible from Greek into Gothic, having first reduced the spoken language into written form and created the Gothic alphabet. It is the earliest known literary work in a Germanic dialect.

His translation is very faithful to the original Greek text he used. It was what would have been about in Byzantium around 350 AD. Western readings were introduced from Old Latin manuscripts.

There are about 6 mss all fairly complete still extant.

Armenian Versions 450 AD

Generally regarded as the most beautiful and accurate of all the early translations of the Bible, the Armenian version has more mss extant than any other except the Latin Vulgate. There are many still in the libraries of the Soviet Union and there are 1244 already catalogued.

The earliest Armenian version seems to have been revised prior to the 8th century AD. In many cases the text of Matthew

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Hebrew Masoretic Texts 600 AD

The early work of Rabbi Hillel c. 600 AD has not survived. The earliest work that has was the Hebrew Bible codex the Cairo Prophets. It was punctuated by **Moses ben Asher** in Tiberias in Palestine in 895 AD.

In 915 the **Leningrad Codex** of the Later Prophets was not the work of ben Asher, but its Babylonian pointing was brought into accord with the Palestinian system.

The **Aleppo Codex** reproduced the Masoretic text of the OT in 380 folios of which 294 remain, was made by **Solomon ben Buya'a** and punctuated by **Aaron ben Asher** around 930 AD. Codex Reuchlini of the Prophets was written in 1105 AD and represents the work of Moses ben David ben Naphtali, which was a system more along the lines of Moses ben Asher.

Mishaël ben Uzziel, brought together the ben Asher and the ben Naphtali streams sometime before 1050 AD.

Ethiopic Version 4th, 6th and 7th century AD

Opinion differs as to whether the translators made use of a Greek or Syriac underlying text. It is a conglomerate text; and in the Pauline epistles the version frequently agrees with p⁴⁶ and also shows contamination with the Coptic and Arabic texts. A mixed text, probably Byzantine in complexion. The OT text has been studied more thoroughly than the NT sections.

Latin Vulgate [Vg] 405 AD - Jerome

The textual variation and the colloquial nature of the Old Latin versions prompted Pope Damasus in 382 AD to remedy the situation.

Eusebius Hieronymus, a.k.a. Jerome [died 419/20] was the outstanding scholar of the day, with a knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

He produced three revisions of the Psalms

[1] Based on the LXX; called the Roman Psalter and became the basis for the liturgical worship in Rome.

[2] Based on the Hexaplaric LXX, was done in Palestine; brought the Latin closer to the Hebrew. Became the Gallican Psalter. This version was later adopted into the Vulgate.

[3] Based directly on the Hebrew

By 405 AD Jerome had finished the OT based on the Hebrew.

545 AD Codex Fuldensis has most of the Vg NT

550 Cassiodorus, who founded 2 monasteries at Vivarium on Benedictine lines, restored the Vg text.

8th Century Codex Amiatinus

801 Alcuin [735-804] of York, later advisor to Charlemagne and Abbot of Tours in 796, revised the Roman Lectionary in Gaul. He presented a copy of Vg to Charlemagne

Lanfranc, [1005-89] Prior of the Abbey at Bec in France, was later consecrated as the Archbishop of Canterbury 1070-1089, used the Vg.

Other Ancient Versions

After the rise of Islam, many books of the New Testament were translated into **Arabic** from the Greek, Syriac, the Coptic dialects and the Latin.

During the 13th Century AD, two revisions were made of the Arabic versions in Alexandria. The tangled web of these versions remains.

Fragments of the **Nubian** and **Sogdian** versions were edited at the beginning of the 12th Century.

Anglo-Saxon version was translated from the Vulgate. Four complete mss and five fragmentary Gospels are known; dating from the 11th to the 13th Century. They include the famous Lindisfarne Gospels and the Rushworth Gospels – Latin mss towards the end of the 7th century.

Two Gospel mss in **Old Persian** were published in the 17th and 18th centuries. Kirsopp Lake thought that one of them showed Caesarean tendencies.

Slavonic Version 4th, 6th and 7th century AD

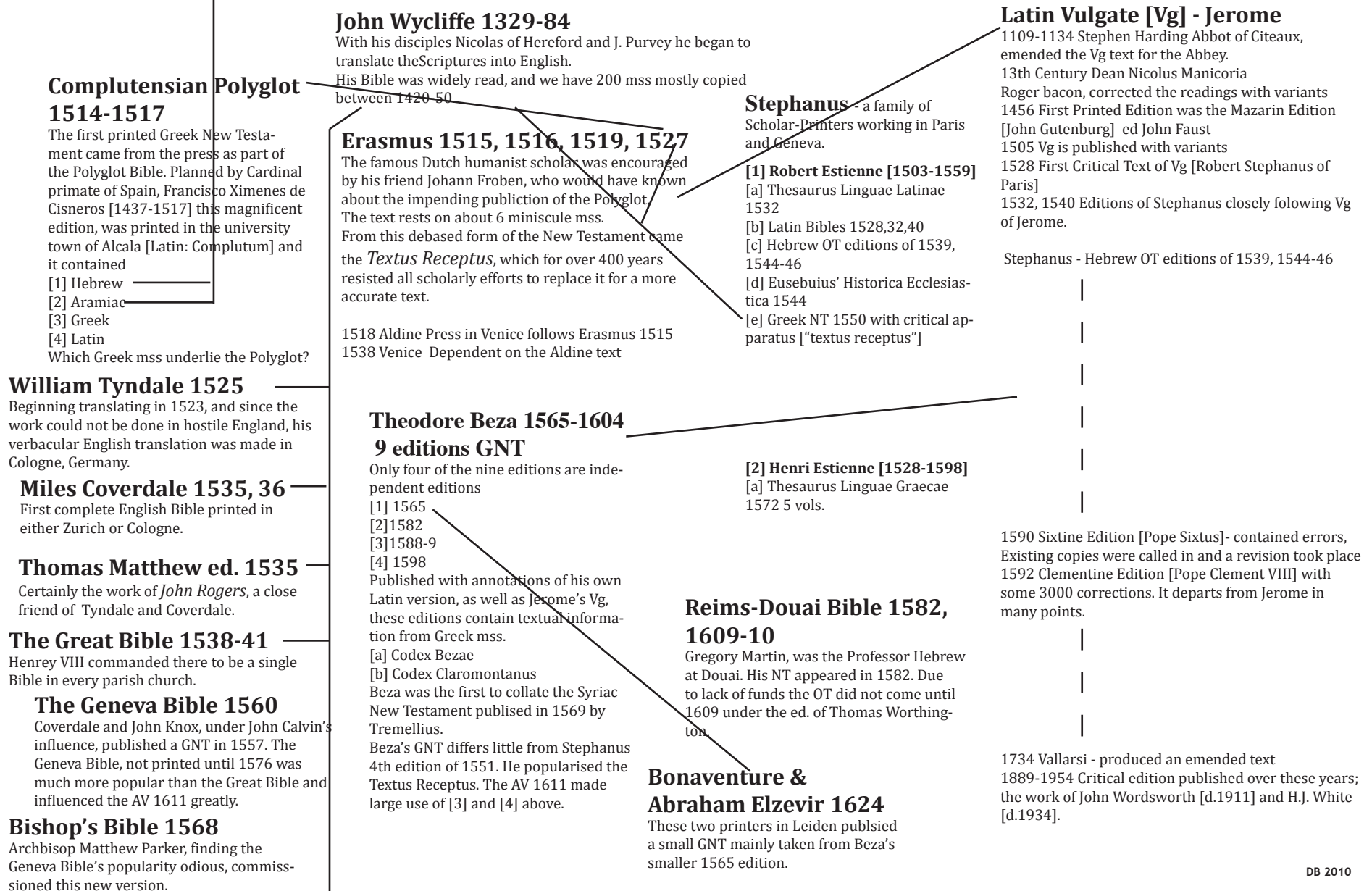
Cyril and Methodius, the apostles to the Slavs, were the sons of a wealthy official. They are credited with designing the Glagolitic alphabet, as well as the Cyrillic alphabet.

About the middle of the 9th century they began translation of the Gospels into Old Bulgarian, commonly called Old Slavonic. They used a Byzantine text.

Georgian Versions 9th century AD

The people of the Caucasian Mountains, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, have their own language. Like the Armenian version, it is an important witness to the Caesarean type of text. Among the oldest known Gospel mss are the Adysh mss of AD 897 [Geo¹] and the Opiza mss of 913 [Geo^{2A}] and the T'bet mss of 995 [Geo^{2B}].

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5 - Textual History - Some major movements and connections

The King James [AV] 1611

1604 a conference of churchmen noted that the existing translations were corrupt. They called for a new translation - King James made it his project.

[1] The impact of the Hebrew set the style of the OT.

[2] The English of the NT turned out to be superior to its Greek original.

Johann Jakob Griesbach

[GNT] 1775 -1807

Laid the foundations for all the subsequent work on the GNT. A pupil of Semmler's at Halle, Griesbach was professor at Univ. of Jena from 1775 till he died in 1812. He was devoted to the NT quotations in the Greek Fathers.

[1] Developed Semmler's and Bengel's grouping of mss in recensions.

[2] Discerned three groups; Alexandrian, Western and Byzantine recensions.

[3] First time a scholar abandoned the TR and printed another one.

B.F.Wescott&F.J.A.Hort [GNT] 1881

These two men produced the most noteworthy critical edition of the GNT ever produced by British scholarship. After 28 years work, they produced two volumes; a text of the GNT and an Introduction to their methods. They refined the critical methods of Lachmann and Griesbach. They applied them rigorously.

[1] Internal evidence is of two kinds: Intrinsic Probability, with respect to the author - what an author is likely to have written - and Transcriptional Probability, with respect to the copyists - what they have made him seem to write.

[2] Internal evidence of the Document looks for the trends that each mss tends to support.

[3] The relationship of several witnesses to each other: Mss have a genealogy; clearly shown by conflate readings. "trustworthy restoration of corrupted texts founded on the study of their history" and their genealogy.

[4] Internal Evidence of Groups - allows us to compare the witness of each group of mss with the others. "Community of reading implies community of origin".

Autograph

Western

D Old Lat
fam Θ so far
as known

Common ancestor of both
Alexandrian and Neutral

Alexandrian
BL 33 Sah Boh

Neutral B A

Syrian A E F G H S V Y most minuscules

Textus Receptus

Revised Version [RV] 1881

A convocation of Canterbury in February 1870 reported

[1] the need for revision of the AV.

[2] Other denominations were invited, the RC's declined.

[3] Parallel companies in the USA to work with English Scholars

[4] Only a revision was intended, not a new translation.

Published May 17, 1881, and 3 days later in USA.

Over 30,000 changes made, of which more than 5000 represent the changed underlying text of the NT. The OT followed in 1885 and the Apochrypha in 1895

American Standard Version [ASV] 1900

As agreed, the preferred readings of the American Revisers were published in an appendix of the RV. In 1900 the edition which incorporated the American Revisers preferences came out.

Karl Lachmann [GNT] 1831, 1842-50

Published a GNT which drew on its textual criticism of the variant readings. He aimed at making a provisional edition of the GNT

Tregelles 1854,1870

Samuel Prideaux Tregelles formed a design for a new critical apparatus which would replace the textus receptus. He collated many Greek texts and produced "An Account of the Printed Text" in 1854. He followed it up with the publication of the GNT in 1870

L.F. Constantin Tischendorf [GNT] 1841-72

[1] Found the Codex Sinaiticus

[2] Made several editions of the Codex Ephraemi [1843-5]; Codex Amiatinus [1850] and the Codex Claromontanus [1852]

[3] Published GNT 8 editions between 1841-72 with full apparatus and variant readings.

Bernhard Weiss [GNT] 1894,1900

Discriminated among readings according to context. Drew up lists of errors he noticed.

Eberhard Nestle [GNT] 1898, 1904

First working in the LXX Nestle, turned to the NT, publishing a GNT text in 1898; working from Tischendorf, Wescott and Hort, and Weiss.

In 1904 this text was adopted the BFBS in place of the Textus Receptus. It went through 9 editions.

Eberhard died in 1913, but the successive German editions of the text - from the 10th on - have been constantly revised by his son **Erwin Nestle**.

In 1927, the apparatus was radically altered for the 13th edition and noteworthy improvements made in the 17th edition in 1941.

Weymouth [WNT] 1903,1904

After many years of textual criticism study, R.F. Weymouth, a Baptist headmaster of Mill Hill School translated from the Greek and published the "New Testament in Modern Speech". Each book had a short introduction and footnotes to the text. He drew from Stephanus' text and also from Tregelles.

Re-visited in 1924 and 1929 by Robertson.

Latin Vulgate [Vg] - Jerome

1734 Vallarsi - produced an emended text

1889-1954 Critical edition published over these years; the work of John Wordsworth [d.1911] and H.J. White [d.1934].

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H.F. von Soden [GNT] 1910,1913

His work contains the results of a long study of the Greek miniscules.

[1] He invented a new set of signs [sigla] for the apparatus criticus.

[2] It was not adopted by scholars who stayed with the old system as it was revised by Caspar Gregory [1908]. von Soden's work is a monument of broad research.

Alexander Souter [GNT] 1910, 1947

Reproduced the Greek Text using that of Edwin Palmer, who constructed the text which underlies RV of 1881. Palmer had taken Stephanus 3rd ed [1550].

[1] Prepared critical apparatus for Palmer's text. Strong on the evidence documented for the Latin Fathers.

[2] The 1947 ed. benefitted from the Chester Beatty papyri. Souter's text is closest to the *textus receptus* than any other used today.

Revised Standard Version [RSV] 1946,1952

These factors were telling in the USA towards a native American Version of the Bible.

[1] several unofficial translations into modern speech had gained popularity

[2] Idea of a non-literary modern rendering was desirable.

[3] Maturing Hebraic scholarship in the USA

[4] In 1928 the copyright of the ASV came into the hands of some 40 denominations.

[5] A thorough revision was proposed in 1937: it was the work of 32 scholars from universities of the USA

[6] First translation to make use of the Dead Sea Scrolls of Isaiah.

[7] A version for use in private and public worship.

Rudolf Kittel -

Biblia Hebraica

3rd ed. 1937, 7th ed. 1951

Formerly based on the Masoretic text of ben Chayyim, this edition goes back to ben Asher, through the large amount of material assembled by Paul Kahle.

The 7th ed, 1951 took into account the Isaiah mss of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

BFBS [GNT]

1904, 1958

[1] The 1958 ed. takes Nestle's text of 1904, and re-worked it with a different apparatus by G.L.Kirkpatrick aided by Erwin Nestle.

Erwin Nestle-Kurt Aland [GNT]

ed. 25, 26 [1960] ed. 29

Novum Testamentum Graece

[1] Based upon Tischendorf, WH and Bernhard Weiss. Where 2 of these three editions agree, then it is the variant printed.

K. Taylor - Living Bible

TLB 1971

A paraphrase of the ASV 1901 with comparisons of other translations and KJV.

New English Bible *[NEB] 1961,70

A completely new translation was first put forward in 1946. Protestant churches of the British Isles, with RC scholars as observers. It abandoned biblical English and archaisms

R.V.G. Tasker [GNT] 1964

An edition of the GNT which was used for the NEB 1961 and was prepared by Tasker, a member of the panel of translators. He cites 270 variant readings in an appendix.

New American Standard Bible

NASB 1971

Recognising the value of the ASV, and based upon on it, the Lockman Foundation wanted to update the text to the Hebrew and Greek advances.

Good News Bible *

1966, 1976, TEV 2001

Prepared by the American Bible Society; and anglicised by the BFBS- Good News for Modern Man 1966.

Born out of the dynamic -equivalence thinking of Eugene Nida which expresses a translation as a 'thought-for-thought'.

Jerusalem Bible 1973*

A RC translation made by the School of Biblical Studies in Jerusalem. It was translated from the French according to Wansbrough.

UBS [GNT] 1966,1968,1975

In 1966, after ten years work by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Allen Wikgren and Bruce Metzger, five Bible Societies published an edition of the GNT for the use of Bible Translators. The section headings reflect those used by the translators. It was based in the NA 25.

The critical apparatus, includes 1440 sets of variant readings chosen for their exegetical significance.

Carlo Martino joined the team for the 2nd and 3rd editions.

In 1975, the 3rd corrected edition followed NA26

NKJV 1979-1982

Published by Thomas Nelson. Conceived by Arthur Farstad and 68 persons, most of them Baptists. Aimed at updating the vocabulary and style of the KJV.

Uses the texts of Biblia Hebraica 1967/77 and also the ben Hayyim edition of 1524-25.

NIV 1978 *

A very Protestant translation, arising from criticism with the RSV. The project started in 1965. 15 biblical Scholars worked for ten years and an international team of 100. This is a dynamic equivalence translation. Published by Zondervan.

New Jerusalem Bible 1985

a Roman Catholic edition edited by Henry Wansbrough, a monk of the Ampleforth Abbey in North Yorkshire. It is a free translation

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New Revised Standard Version NRSV 1989

A thorough revision of the RSV
[1] Biblica Hebraica 1966/77
[2] NA 27th edition
It comes in three editions. NRSV, NRSV common, and a RC edition.

Revised English Bible REB 1989

[1] Biblica Hebraica 1966/77
[2] NA 27th edition
[3] Codex Bezae
[4] LXX influence
A Dynamic equivalence style of translation. It is an up date of the NEB 1970

New Living Translation NLT 1996

[1] Biblica Hebraica 1966/77
[2] NA 27th edition
A revision to the Living Bible paraphrase.

Holman Christian Standard Bible HCSB 1999, 2004

[1] Biblica Hebraica 1966/77
[2] NA 27th edition
Arthur Farstad and LifeWay Christian resources - the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist convention. It was originally intended by Farstad to be revision of the KJV and NKJV; but after his death, Edwin Blum moved it to UBS 4 and NA 27

Complete Jewish Bible CJB 1998

The work of Dr. David Stern in English; consisting of Old Testament Tanakh and includes his Jewish New Testament [JNT]. [1] Syriac Peshitta
[2] NA 27th edition
A free translation with Yiddish and Modern Jewish expressions

English Standard Version ESV 2001

[1] Biblica Hebraica 1966/77
[2] NA 27th edition
[3] LXX influence
A revision of the RSV 1971, standing in the stream of the Tyndale 1525-6, RV 1881, ASV 1901.
J.I.Packer was the theological editor.

New English Translation- NET 2005 *

[1] Biblica Hebraica 1966/77
[2] NA 27th edition
This is a free, online English Translation, of the dynamic equivalence type, sponsored by the Biblical Studies Foundation [www.Bible.org].
It is, like the NIV, a totally new translation. Conceived at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature [www.sbl-site.org] 1995 in Pennsylvania.