

The Bible: Its Transmission & Value
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**SESSION 1:
MODERN TRANSLATIONS: WHY DO THEY DIFFER
AND WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE?**

Translation Technique:

Is the translation literal, idiomatic or paraphrastic?

(1) Luke 2:1:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed (KJV, rather literal).

Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth (NASB, rather literal).

In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world (NIV, more idiomatic).

In those days a decree was issued by the Emperor Augustus for a registration to be made throughout the Roman world (NEB, idiomatic-paraphrastic).

About this time Caesar Augustus, the Roman emperor, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the nation (LB, paraphrastic).

(2) Prov 10:11:

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence (NASB).

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked (NIV).

There is living truth in what a good man says, but the mouth of the evil man is filled with curses (LB).

Theological Outlook:

Is the translation liberal or evangelical, Catholic or sectarian?

(1) Gen 1:6:

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters (KJV).

Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters" (NASB, evangelical).

God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters" (NEB, liberal).

(2) John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (NASB).

When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God

was, the Word was (NEB).
In [the] beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god
(NWT, Jehovah's Witnesses).

(3) Matt 16:18:

...you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church... (NASB, evangelical).

...you are Peter, the Rock, and on this rock I will build my church... (NEB, ecumenical).

...you are "Rock," and on this rock I will build my church... (NAB, Catholic).

(4) Isa 9:6:

And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince
of Peace (NASB, evangelical).

...and he shall be called in purpose wonderful, in battle, God-like, Father for all time,
Prince of Peace (NEB, liberal).

And his name is called Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom (JPS, Jewish, w/ footnote:
"That is, Wonderful in counsel is God the mighty, the everlasting Father, the
Ruler of Peace").

(5) Gen 11:1:

Once upon a time... (NEB, liberal).

Textual Basis:

Is the underlying Greek or Hebrew text based on the traditional text, a critical text or
conjecture?

Traditional Text: the text of OT and NT as it existed in the majority of manuscripts
known at the time the Bible first began to be printed (c AD 1500).

Critical Text: the text of the OT and NT as reconstructed from all presently-known
manuscripts, giving greater weight to those manuscripts which are earlier and/or
appear to be more reliable. e.g., (see the marginal notes in NASB): differences
range from single words (Matt 6:1, Jn 1:18, Acts 20:28) to phrases (Jn 6:69, 1
Thess 3:2) up to several verses (Mk 16:9-20, Jn 7:53-8:11).

Conjecture: reconstructing some part of the text where the editor feels that none of the
manuscripts existing today preserves the original reading. Extremely rare in NT;
in OT, rarely done by conservatives, more common with liberals. e.g.,

(1) 1 Sam 13:1: cp KJV & NASB

(2) Ps 2:12:

Do homage to the son (NASB, conservative).

Kiss the king (NEB, liberal).

Bow down to him (GNB, liberal).

Kiss his feet (RSV, liberal).

A SIMPLIFIED CHART OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

THEOLOGICAL OUTLOOK

	Conservative	Liberal	
TRANSLATION TECHNIQUE	Very Literal	NASB ERV KJV	ASV RSV
	Idiomatic	NIV	GNB(NT) GNB(OT) NAB JB
	Paraphrastic	LB	NEB

SOME TESTS FOR A THEOLOGICALLY-SOUND TRANSLATION

1. Do the translators believe the apostles properly understood OT Scripture?
 - Peter: cp Acts 2:27 w/ Ps 16:10 (Does the person in the Ps die? Is decay mentioned?)
 - Matthew: cp Mt 1:23 w/ Isa 7:14 (Isa mention virgin?)
 - Author of Hebrews: cp Heb 1:8 w/ Ps 45:6 (Is God addressed?)

2. Do the translators believe the apostles thought Jesus was God?
 - John: Jn 1:1; 8:58
 - Paul: Rom 9:5
 - Author of Hebrews: Heb 1:8

3. Do the translators play down Messianic prophecy?
 - Ps 2:12 (kiss the Son?)
 - Ps 22:16 (pierced hands?)
 - Isa 9:6 (names suggest deity?)
 - sa 53:10,12 (dies and lives again?)
 - Dan 9:24-25 (Messiah or just an annointed one?)
 - Micah 5:2 (eternally existing or originated long ago?)
 - Zech 12:10 (look on "me" whom they have pierced?)

4. Do the translators play down resurrection in the OT?
 - 1 Sam 2:6; Job 19:25-27; Ps 17:15; Ps 49:14-15

5. Do the translators "correct" the text without manuscript support? Check introduction and footnotes.

**SESSION 2:
THE HAND-COPYING OF THE BIBLE:
CAN WE HAVE CONFIDENCE IN IT?**

Causes of Error:

Contrast machine printing and hand copying:
independence of copies
value of proofreading

Accidental Changes:

errors of sight or writing: confusion of letters, skipping, interchange, wrong word
division
errors of hearing: similar sounds
errors of memory: synonyms, influence of parallels
errors of judgment: abbreviations, marginal notes

Intentional Changes:

attempted corrections: grammatical, harmonization, combination
doctrinal corrections: in surviving manuscripts, generally toward "orthodoxy"

Correction of Error:

Collation of manuscripts: collect variants, study characteristics of individual manuscripts

Internal Tests: context, style, harder reading, shorter reading, best explains others

External Tests: best manuscript, best combinations, best family

Estimation of Error:

Testing growth of error during period we have manuscripts:
compare KJV with NASB
cp Traditional Text with Codex Vaticanus
cp medieval Heb mss w/ Dead Sea Scrolls

Results: no doctrines of Scripture differ; variations at most only involve question of whether a given doctrine taught in a particular place or not

**SESSION 3:
THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS;
WHAT DO WE HAVE TODAY?**

Introduction:

Because of the increasing damage which occurs to written materials as time passes, for virtually any ancient work we have fragments that have survived from earlier times rather than have complete copies of the work.

New Testament Manuscripts:

The originals were probably written over the period AD 50-100. The earliest fragment which is undisputed is a scrap from the Gospel of John, written about AD 125, less than a generation after the work itself. The earliest nearly complete copy of a whole book (also John) comes from about AD 200. The oldest remaining complete copy of the whole NT dates back to about AD 350.

Old Testament Manuscripts:

The originals were probably written over the period 1400-400 BC. The earliest fragments discovered to date are among the Dead Sea Scrolls: parts of Exodus and Samuel from about 250 BC. The earliest complete book (Isaiah) comes from the same find, dating to about 150 BC. These manuscripts are actually older than the Jewish sect which was using them. The earliest complete copy of the whole OT, surprisingly, is a Greek translation, dating from AD 350. The earliest complete Hebrew manuscript only goes back to about AD 950.

Comparison with Other Works:

WORK	ORIGINALLY WRITTEN	EARLIEST COMPLETE MS	DIFFERENCE
New Testament	c75	c350	c275
Josephus	c90	c1000	c900
Plutarch	c100	c950	c850
Tacitus	c100	c850	c750

WORK	ORIGINALLY WRITTEN	EARLIEST COMPLETE MS	DIFFERENCE
Old Testament	1400-400 BC	c350 AD	750-1750
Enuma Elish	c1750 BC	c650 BC	c1100
Rigveda	1500-1000 BC	c1350 AD	2350-2850
Iliad	700+ BC	c1050 AD	c1750+

**SESSION 4:
THE AUTOGRAPHS:
WHAT ARE THEY WORTH?**

The Bible's Own Claims for Itself:

The ultimate author is God, creator of the universe and controller of history: 2 Tim 3:16; Ps 119:1,89; Gen 1:1; Prov 16:1,9,33

The Bible's contents give us what we need to know to solve our deepest problems and to transform us into happy, fulfilled, useful people: 2 Tim 3:15-17; Ps 119: 1,97-100,105; Ps 1:1-6

The Bible's Evidence for Itself:

Cosmology: The Bible pictures a universe with an origin rather than an eternal one, and this universe was planned by the eternal God (e.g., Gen 1). This fits the data of cosmology as known today better than alternatives. See Jastrow, *God & the Astronomers*; Newman and Eckelmann, *Genesis One & the Origin of the Earth*.

Biology: This is an area of hot controversy today. The Bible pictures life and consciousness as having a non-natural origin, though the exact nature of God's intervention may be disputed. Scientists seeking to explain the origin of life and consciousness naturalistically face the apparently insuperable problem that randomness cannot produce the levels of order actually observed in living things. See Hoyle and Wickramasinghe, *Evolution from Space*.

Prophecy: The essence of a good theory is successful prediction. As the Bible claims to be authored by the One who controls history, so it has many predictions of detailed events far in advance of their fulfillment. For instance, the world-wide impact of the Messiah's ministry (Isa 49:6); the religio-political future of Israel (Hos 3:4-5); the details of destruction of numerous cities (Jer 51:42-43; Ezk 26:4,12; Ezk 30:13). These have been strikingly fulfilled. See Urquhart, *Wonders of prophecy*; Stoner and Newman, *Science speaks*; McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

History: There is also historical evidence of supernatural intervention into history. The most striking cases involve the time of Moses and the Exodus and the ministry of Christ. But occult phenomena today also point to the activity of the supernatural from the "other side." Secular humanists and others who deny supernatural intervention have had to construct some pretty strained theories in seeking to avoid these phenomena.

Experience: The history of Christianity is filled with examples of the transformation of individuals and societies by the influence of the Gospel. No other religions have produced a comparable effect, certainly not secular humanism.