

Classifying Various Bible Translations

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These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, “**For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God.**” (John 3:16–18). “**I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!**” (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). **If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Classifications		
Ultra Literal Translations	Literal, almost word-for-word translations	Expanded/Embellished Bibles
Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles	Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur)	Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing)
Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations	Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases	Nearly always a different point of view/vocabulary
Limited Vocabulary Translations	Great Reading Bibles	Good Reading Bibles
Good Footnotes	Painful to Read	Outdated Bibles
Translations which often present an original or fresh view	Translations which do not appear to offer anything different	

Preface: There are as many as a 1000 English translations of the Bible¹; and about 100 of these are somewhat significant. They have been classified and categorized below.

Updated, better version in Genesis.

¹ The 2013 book *Encyclopedia of English Language Bible Versions* lists 1400 versions of the English Bible.

Below is a list of available English translations—most of which are available online or in Bible programs (like **e-sword**, which is a free Bible computer program).

You will note that many translations fall into more than one category. Unless otherwise indicated, these translations/versions are not in any particular order within a category.

Classifying Various Bible Translations

Classification	Bible Translations
Ultra Literal Translations:	Young’s Literal Translation, Brenner’s Mechanical Translation, the exeGeses companion Bible. The latter two are quite difficult to read; and the first is archaic.
Literal, almost word-for-word translations:	Best (in terms of readability): NKJV, NASB, MEV, ESV (these translations are the most readable of the literal translation group); Benjamin Brodie’s translation; R. B. Thieme, Jr.’s Translation. Good: WEB, NEV, KJV, CLV, CGV, Emphasized Bible, Green’s Literal translation, KJV3, MKJV, Updated Bible Version, Webster’s Bible translation; a Voice in the Wilderness; the Amplified Bible, the Expanded Bible, Kretzmann’s Commentary (which is the KJV along with additional explanatory text); the Amplified Bible.
Expanded/Embellished Bibles:	The Amplified Bible, the Expanded Bible, Kretzmann’s Commentary (which is the KJV along with additional explanatory text); the NET Bible; The Voice; Translation for Translators.
<p>I would also classify the ExB and the NET Bible as “Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing);” however, the additional text often moves them closer to the “literal translations,” as both Bibles contain many footnotes/textnotes which read <i>literally</i>... The Voice is <i>very</i> readable, which adds some additional explanatory text (italicized, with very few additional notes).</p>	
Jewish/Hebrew Names Bibles:	The Complete Jewish Bible; exeGesis Companion Bible; Hebraic Roots Bible; JPS (Tanakh—1985); Kaplan Translation (I think he has only done the Pentateuch); the Orthodox Jewish Bible; The Scriptures 1998.
<p>These are not books necessarily approved by some Jewish group, but translations which use the Jewish transliteration for names (The Scriptures 1998), or keep a format compatible with the original Hebrew (ECB), or are done by a Jewish organization (The 1985 Tanakh). Some of these might even be <i>Christian</i> Bibles (The Complete Jewish Bible—called <i>complete</i> because it contains the Old and New Testaments).</p>	
Catholic Bibles (those having the imprimatur):	The Christian Community Bible (1988); the New American Bible (2002); New American Bible (2011); New Jerusalem Bible; New RSV; Revised English Bible; the Catholic edition of TEV (the Good News Bible); the CEV.

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Classification

Bible Translations

Both versions of the NAB are quite good. I think that the REB is a great reading Bible—its choice of words is often unique and interesting.

Whereas, there are still some great problems with the Catholic Church (none of which can I imagine ever going away); their view on the Word of God has changed dramatically since the Middle Ages. At one time, the Catholic Church persecuted believers who tried to translate the Bible into a modern language (some were executed). They did everything possible to keep the Word of God out of the hands of the believer. Their church services were held in Latin for people who did not speak Latin. However, today, the Catholic Church gives its stamp of approval to many excellent translations. Many times, the associated commentary is not bad either. Just remember to ignore the apocrypha.

Since dividing up the Bible translations using most of these basic categories, I have been surprised how close Jewish and Catholic translations tend to be. You might think that a Jewish translation tends to favor some form of Judaism and that a Catholic translation seems to conform to and promote Catholic doctrine, but that is *not* the case. Whereas that is occasionally the case with some footnotes which are added; it is almost never the case with the actual text of Scripture. Apart from the Jewish Bibles occasionally making use of some specifically Jewish words and names, you would be hard-pressed in a blind test to differentiate between a Jewish Bible and a Catholic Bible.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

The Awful Scroll Bible; the Conservapedia translation; Ferrar-Fenton’s Bible translation; God’s Truth (Tyndale); HCSB; the Jubilee Bible 2000; H. C. Leupold’s translation; the Lexham English Bible; the NIV; the Tree of Life Version; the Urim-Thummim Version; the WikiBible.

Partially literal and partially paraphrased translations:

American English Bible; Beck’s American Translation; International Standard Version; New Advent (Knox) Bible (there is an updated version); Today’s NIV; Translation for Translators; The Voice.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

Casual English Bible; Common English Bible; Contemporary English Version; The Living Bible; the New Berkeley Version; the New Century Version; the New Life Version; The Message; the Good News Bible (TEV); the New Living Translation.

Nearly always a different point of view/vocabulary:

The Knox Bible (and the Revised Knox Bible); the American English Bible; the Urim-Thummim Version; The Message; God’s Truth (Tyndale); Contemporary English Version; the New Living Translation; the Bible in Basic English; the Voice.

I do not mean that these have an incorrect point of view, but that they are almost always translated differently in some respect, which is sometimes quite helpful in understanding a verse (assuming, of course, that their take is accurate).

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Classification	Bible Translations
Limited Vocabulary Translations:	Bible in Basic English; Casual English Bible; the Easy English translation; the Easy-to-Read Version–2006; the International Children’s Bible (this appears to be a slightly simplified version of the NCV); God’s Word™; the Good News Bible (TEV); The Message; the Names of God Bible (which is almost equivalent to God’s Word™); the New International Readers’ Version; the New Simplified Bible, the New Life Bible, the Contemporary English Version.
For a simple reading Bible, I prefer God’s Word™, ICB, NCV, and the NIRV from those Bibles above (in case you wanted a Bible for a young son or daughter; or wanted a Bible that you could use to read to a young son or daughter). Often, the New Simplified Bible isn’t.	
Great Reading Bibles	The ISV; the ESV; the MEV, the NKJV; the New International Readers’ Bible; the New Living Translation; the Revised English Bible.
Good Reading Bibles	Beck’s American Translation; Casual English Bible, Common English Bible; Contemporary English Version; The Living Bible; the Message; the New Century Version; the Good News Bible (TEV); God’s Word™; the Easy-to-Read Version–2006 ² ; the International Children’s Bible (which is almost exactly the same as the NCV); God’s Word™ (which is almost the same as the Names of God Bible ³); the New Jerusalem Bible; the New American Bible (2011); the Complete Jewish Bible; JPS (Tanakh—1985) ⁴ ; the Heritage Bible; the Voice.
I think that the best approach is a good reading Bible, which is also an accurate translation.	
Good Footnotes	The Casual English Bible; the NET Bible; New American Standard Version; the New American Bible (2011); the Spoken English New Testament; Wilbur Pickering’s NT.
Painful to Read	The Awful Scroll Bible; Brenner’s Mechanical Translation; Concordant Literal Version, Exegesis Companion Bible; the Expanded Bible; the King James Version (for some; not for all); the Orthodox Jewish Bible; Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible; Young’s Literal Translation.
Outdated Bibles	American Standard Version; Concordant Literal Version; Ferrar-Fenton (original); King James Version; Revised Standard Version; Worsley’s New Testament.

² The 2002 Easy-to-read-Bible has some serious deficiencies; I don’t think that there is any difference between the 2006 and 2008 versions. As far as I know, the 2002 version is only available with old versions of e-Sword.

³ In the Names of God Bible, the names of God are bolded and italicized; and the Names of God Bible has *Elohim* rather than *God*.

⁴ This is Old Testament only.

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Classification	Bible Translations
Translations which often present an original or fresh view.	Casual English Bible; Revised English Bible; the Knox Bible (and Revised Knox Bible); the International Standard Version; Ferrar-Fenton (revised or original); Plain English Bible.
Translations which do not appear to offer anything different.	American Revised Version 2005; Bond Slave Version; A Conservative Version; King James 2000 Version; KJ3; Modern KJV; Modern Literal Version; Natural Israelite Bible; the Niobi Bible; the Restored Holy Bible; Restored Names Version; 21 st Century KJV; and the Word of Yahweh.

What I mean by this is, rarely do I list any of these translations, even though I often read them when working on a passage, as they rarely offer anything new beyond the literal, often word-for-word translations—using the same vocabulary and sentence structure as the more common NKJV, NASB, ESV and MEV. The way that a thought is expressed or the vocabulary is not new or different from those listed in the 2nd category above.

These are not hard-and-fast classifications. From time to time, I change them (particularly when it comes to their degree of literalness). It is not unusual for one verse may be very literally translated, and then the next verse is more free-form in some of these translations/versions. Or, there may be a verse which has a lot of additional text added; but the next verse is translated almost literally, with no added text.

My guess is, you probably had no idea that there were so many different English Bible translations. Most of these can be found online or available to e-sword (which is an excellent and free Bible computer program). Additional Bibles and commentaries can be found at [Bible Support](#) (you have to sign in so that you can download these).

On occasion, there are some serious differences in the text of various Bibles. In those situations, it is good to have a pastor-teacher or commentator familiar with the passage to sort it out. And, so there is no misunderstanding, nearly every believer in the Church Age needs to be under the authority of his right pastor-teacher. About the only exception to this would be the pastor-teacher of a local church. I am a commentator, and I am in church for nearly every service (Bobby teaches 4 lessons/week at Berachah Church and rarely do I miss even a single class in a month).

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