

## TWENTIETH-CENTURY ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

The twentieth century has emerged as a major period of Bible translations and publications. The article explores both the cultural and social circumstances under which the English Bible translations of the twentieth century were produced and aspects relating to the translation process and reception. It offers insights into the underlying objectives and qualities of translations as well as the tradition from which they stem. The primary concern for meaning and readability has influenced the nature of Bible translation of this period, breaking down the socio-cultural distance between modern readers and the original contexts of the Bible.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

From 1526, when Tyndale printed his first complete *English New Testament* in Worms, to 1900, approximately 1 500 new translations from Hebrew and Greek into English were generated. According to David Daniell (2003:769), an equal number of new translations were produced in the twentieth century, over 1 200 of which between 1945 and 1990. Thirty-five of these were original translations of the entire Bible, and eighty of the New Testament alone. The twentieth century experienced a proliferation in the number and variety of new Bible translations not only in English, but also in numerous European languages and in hundreds of languages and dialects throughout the world (over 1 200).

This article explores both the cultural and social circumstances under which the English Bible translations were produced and aspects relating to the translation process and reception. It offers insights into the subjacent objectives and qualities of such translations as well as the tradition from which they stem. The article is restricted to translations from the Hebrew and Greek source texts, excluding Bibles with

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note systems, for example *The Anchor Bible*. It is beyond the scope of this article to refer to all English Bible translations of the twentieth century. Those mentioned or discussed are examples of the main trends in Bible translation during this period. A full inventory of specific translations is not provided. The method of descriptive translation studies (known as DTS) is used.

## 2. FUTILE EFFORTS TO REPLACE THE KING JAMES VERSION (1901-1952)

### 2.1 The American revision of the *King James Version*

The dawn of the twentieth century witnessed the issue of the *American Standard Version* (ASV) (1901) of the Bible (Lewis 1981:79-90), a newly edited form (in the tradition of the *King James Version* [KJV]) of the (British) *Revised Version* (RV) of 1885 (Old and New Testament). The RV offended the American readers by its failure to exclude several earlier recommendations of the American Committee. Work on the new revision commenced in 1897. The revision method entailed meticulous attention to verbal accuracy and literal translation short of blatant violation of English usage, or intentional misrepresentation of the author's meaning. It incorporates the readings and renderings preferred by the Americans, including the use of "Jehovah" for the Tetragrammaton and "Holy Spirit" for Holy Ghost. It also substitutes "Sheol" for "the grave", "the pit", and "hell". In the New Testament the word "Saint" is omitted from the titles of the Gospels, and the title of the Epistle to the Hebrews no longer quotes Paul the Apostle as its author. Archaic sixteenth-century words such as "bewray", "holpen" and "sith" are omitted (Lewis 1981:96-104). The orthography of proper names is improved. The product is a mechanically exact, literal, word-for-word translation into English. Although the ASV in many ways outclassed the RV, it was hardly appreciated in the first decades of the twentieth century and failed to supplant the KJV (itself a revision in the Tyndale tradition). The issue is not comprehension, but tone. ASV was not the clean, new all-American Bible of the future. Another reason for the primary status of KJV is its achievement under the patronage of a government, which not only succeeded in maintaining itself nationally, but also managed to expand its global sway.

## 2.2 The *Jewish Publication Society (JPS)* version/Bible

The *JPS* was essentially a very modest revision based on the *RV* published by the British in 1885 (Kubo & Specht 1983:117-118). The *JPS* translation claims to take into account “the existing English versions” and to reflect ancient versions as well as the observations of traditional rabbinic commentators. In its making the *JPS* was checked against every line of the *KJV* and the *RV*. The project was completed in 1917. The *JPS* adhered to the word-for-word philosophy of translation and to the old-fashioned vocabulary and style. What made it essentially Jewish was its de-Christianisation of the Christianised passages of the Hebrew. No attempt was made to produce an original translation directly from the Hebrew text.

## 2.3 Independent modern speech versions of the first half of the twentieth century

Besides the attempt to produce a revision of the *KJV* in the United States, a number of unofficial versions mostly in modern speech were produced either by individuals or committees unfettered by doctrinal considerations and institutional interests. They set the pace for future official translations. The sudden spurt in the availability of older manuscripts, for example the discovery of the Greek papyri, and an increased knowledge of classical languages stimulated the production of such translations. It became clear that the New Testament documents were written in a plain, simple style to meet the needs of ordinary people. In order to communicate the message they had to be translated into the kind of English, i.e. non-literary contemporary speech, that would meet the needs of those who were not conversant with the language of the traditional English versions.

The main features of a selection of the British translations from this period will now be discussed. The *Twentieth-century New Testament* was issued as a single volume in 1901 (Bruce 1978:153-156; Kubo & Specht 1983:27-31) after fourteen years' work by a group of thirty-five men and women of various ages, religious affiliations and educational qualifications, none of whom belonged to the school of linguistic and textual experts who produced the *RV* or *ASV*. The translation, which was a pioneer in modern speech versions, aimed to exclude all words

and phrases not used in current English. Amounts of money were given in current values. Poetry was printed in poetic form. Many phrases featuring in this translation influenced later translations. For example, 1 Corinthians 10:24, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (KJV). The RV saw the need to correct this to "...but each his neighbour's good." The *Twentieth-century New Testament* edition established the form of this verse: "A man must not study his own interests, but the interests of others." This pioneer phrasing led to the best translations without exception (Metzger 2001:109).

*New Testament in Modern Speech*, translated by R.F. Weymouth, is perhaps the first modern speech version (Bruce 1978:156-160; Kubo & Specht 1983:32-34). It was issued in 1903, 1904, and 1909. Weymouth, a Baptist layman and headmaster of the Mill Hill School for boys, ascertained the meaning of the Greek text before proceeding to express it in contemporary English. In other words, Weymouth was interested in the way in which an inspired writer would have written had he lived in a later period of time. The translation is couched in modern, dignified but diffused English. The translation of 1 Corinthians 10:24 provides an idea of the nature of Weymouth's translation: "Let no one seek his own good, but let each seek that of his fellow man."

*The Bible: A New Translation* by James Moffatt ranks among the most popular modern speech translations. An edition of the complete Bible was published in London in one volume in 1926, and a revision was published in the United States in 1935. Moffatt attempted to provide an entirely new version in modern speech capable of producing an effect similar to that of the original text on the readers or audience. Consider for example, Genesis 1:1: "This is the story of how the universe was formed". In the Pentateuch, in accordance with the documentary theory, Moffatt sought to indicate multiple authors by alternating Roman and Italic type. He deemed the source text to be corrupt, implying that every page contains some emendation.

Among the more recent modern-language translations from Britain is *The New Testament in Modern English* by J.B. Phillips, an Anglican parish minister (Bruce 1978:223-225; Kubo & Specht 1983:69-88). Phillips produced this translation in facile style as a means of capturing the interest of young people who were unable to understand or

appreciate more traditional translations such as the *KJV*. It became a bestseller. It is highly colloquial, with deliberate, vivid and idiomatic language including the abundant use of paraphrase to reveal the meaning of complicated passages. Compare for example Romans 12:19: “Never take vengeance into your own hands, my dear friends; stand back and let God punish if he will” to the *KJV*: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.” Unfortunately, it appears that in numerous passages he used the *Textus Receptus* as source text rather than a critically established text. It became one of the most widely read translations of the New Testament in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Other translations in a popular, contemporary style include: the Chicago Press publication *The Bible: An American Translation of the Bible* by J.M. Powis Smith and Edgar J. Goodspeed (1931) (Bruce 1978:172-173); *The New Testament in Plain English* by Charles Kingsley Williams, published in 1949, an excellent version of approximately 2000 basic English words suitable for children or foreigners learning English (Bruce 1978:177-179), and *The New Testament in the Language of Today* by William F. Beck which attempts to render the words in their nearest single-word English equivalent. For example, in the *KJV* “behold” is rendered as “look”; “serpent” as “snake”, and “blessed” in the beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) as “happy”.

The modern speech versions are typical of the era prior to the *Revised Standard Version (RSV)*. Their origins are independent of the *KJV* and its revisions (*RV* and *ASV*) and are mostly based on a critical edition of the source text. Each has its intrinsic merit and is still in use. Metzger (2001:116) mentions that their contribution to the *RSV* makes them noteworthy. Two of the translators, Goodspeed and Moffatt, served on the New Testament committee for the *RSV*, while Leroy Waterman of the University of Michigan, Smith’s colleague, occupied a similar position in respect of the Old Testament. James Moffatt served as secretary for both committees until his demise in 1944. Their efforts made the English public accustomed to reading Scripture in the modern English vernacular. This made them unsympathetic towards the revisers’ continued use of archaic speech. The *KJV* outlasted its usefulness. In addition, with decline of the British monarchic tradition, the status of the *KJV* as its ordained Bible concomitantly dwindled (Orlinsky & Bratcher 1991:38-39).

Post-World War I economic and social problems, the rampant inflation of the 1920s, the depression of 1929 and the consequent totalitarianism that scourged Europe in the 1930s caused so much anxiety and despair that people were inclined to question science as a solution to their problems. Many reverted to religion and the Bible as an additional resource. However, the *KJV* and its revisions, *RV* and *ASV*, no longer met their needs. Thus, in the 1930s Protestant and Catholic authorities conceived the idea of producing a new Bible: the *RSV*, published in 1952, emanating from the new rival power, the United States.

### 3. THE *RSV* AS A TRANSITIONAL PHASE IN BIBLE TRANSLATION (1952-1975)

The *RSV* (1952) is an authorised revision of the *ASV* (1901). The *ASV* copyright was acquired and renewed in 1928 by the (American) International Council of Religious Education, which appointed the Standard Bible Committee, consisting of fifteen scholars, to make recommendations on the need for further revision. A proposal was made for the revised translation to retain its close association with the Tyndale-King James tradition (Bruce 1987:186). The best Hebrew and Greek source texts were to be used and the English usage was to reflect the modern vernacular. The work was interrupted in the early 1930s. A contract was negotiated with Thomas Nelson and Sons, publishers of the *ASV*, to finance the work of revision by dint of advance royalties. In return, the exclusive rights to publish the *RSV* for the next decade were granted.

The chairperson was Luther A. Weigle of Yale Divinity School (Lewis 1981:108). Once work had commenced, the hope was expressed that British scholars would co-operate in order to make this version truly international. Collaboration was not afforded as the delegates of several Protestant churches in Great Britain favoured the idea of an entirely novel translation (Bruce 1978:187).

The *RSV* followed mainstream positions on textual and other critical issues (Bruce 1978:186-203; Lewis 1981:107-128; Kubo & Specht 1983:45-60). Idiosyncratic theories of translation or minority views emanating from biblical scholarship were avoided. Specialists (for example, Professor G.R. Driver of Oxford) were consulted on questionable aspects of cultural-historical aspects, English usage, etc. Changes to

the *ASV* required a two-thirds majority of the entire committee. The language of the *RSV* was intended to be “in the direction of the simple, classic English style of the *King James Version*.” This approach distinguished the proposed translation from modern speech translations and paraphrases, and abolished the requirement of using Elizabethan English, a restriction scrupulously honoured by the translators of the English *RV* and the *ASV*. In this text the name “Jehovah” is replaced by the title “Lord”. Archaic forms of pronouns are discarded. Similar English is used for parallel passages in identical Greek. In the Old Testament, the *RSV* introduces Hebrew poetry as English poetry. Separate committees produced the New Testament, the complete Bible, and the Apocrypha in 1946, 1952 and 1957, respectively.

Despite the unfounded criticism of some American Protestant fundamentalists, the outcome was a resounding success (Lewis 1981:109). This was a truly American Bible for the American readers. The first printing of the completed Bible produced a million copies. By 1990 55 million copies of the *RSV* had been sold. In Britain, the *RSV* was accepted and deemed to be sufficiently similar to the *KJV* to be used comfortably in formal services; it was commissioned by an ecumenical body and was based on sound source texts. Although the *RSV* introduced the large numbers of Bible versions available on the contemporary market of American Bible versions, it is now regarded as a somewhat traditional translation in terms of translation theory. This view is confirmed by its retention of archaic language (Lewis 1981: 115-117).

A Catholic edition of the *RSV* was published in 1966 and an ecumenical edition from Collins in Glasgow was issued in 1973 (Kubo & Specht 1983:54-57). This volume comprises four sections: (a) the 39 books of the Old Testament; (b) the 12 deuterocanonical books or parts of books; (c) three books forming part of the traditional Apocrypha but not included among the deuterocanonical books, and (d) the 27 books of the New Testament. For the first time since the Reformation, one edition of the Bible was acceptable to Protestant, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches.

Unlike other translation committees, which dissolved upon the completion of their work, the *RSV* committee with changes in personnel

(chaired first by Herbert May and then by Bruce Metzger) continued to meet regularly and in 1989 issued a revised edition of the *RSV*, the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* (Kubo & Specht 1983:58-60).

It is unanimously agreed that the *RSV* was transitional phase towards a new era in Bible translation (Kubo & Specht 1983:58; Lewis 1981: 127-128; Orlinsky & Bratcher 1991:155). First, the period 1952 to 1978 was Jewish-Catholic-Protestant. Secondly, this period introduces a significant change in the overall philosophy of Bible translation, revealing the unprecedented attempt by Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant communities in the United States and Great Britain to omit the mechanical, word-for-word reproduction of the Hebrew and Greek texts, a procedure that haunted Bible translation from the outset. Instead, the focus is to make the original meaning accessible to its readers. Eugene A. Nida and his colleagues of the American Bible Society and the United Bible Societies are among those who played a crucial role in the development of the theory and practice of Bible translation at this stage.

#### 4. THE BREAK WITH THE *KJV-RSV* TRADITION (1952-2000)

##### 4.1 Corporate Bible translations

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the appearance of numerous new English versions of the Bible, of which some had been in preparation for over two decades. During the nearly forty years between the publication in 1952 of the *RSV* and that in 1990 of the *NRSV*, 27 English renderings of the entire Bible and 28 renderings of the New Testament were issued (Metzger 2001:117). All the important translations were new and not revisions. This represents a distinctive break with the *KJV-RSV* tradition. One exception was the *New American Standard Version (NASV)*, a revision of the *ASV* (1901), sponsored by a private foundation. A second break with the *KJV* tradition was the nature of the translation committees. The new translations emanated from corporate committees consisting of senior scholars from many denominations. However, as a natural product of the common body of scholarship in terms of translation, interconfessional co-operation was tardy.



The *Jerusalem Bible* (*JB*) was a Catholic project, the *New Jewish Version* (*NJV*) Jewish, and the *New English Bible* (*NEB*), the *New International Version* (*NIV*), and *Today's English Version* (*TEV*) Protestant. Only the *New American Bible* (*NAB*) resulted from active collaboration between Catholic and Protestant scholars. The style and vocabulary of the *JB* and *NEB* are more British, whereas those of the others are more American. *NEB* published the *Old Testament Apocrypha* as a separate volume, but incorporated it into some editions of the entire Bible, as *RSV* had done earlier. In *NAB* and *JB* the deuterocanonical books appear as usual among the books of the Old Testament. A short exposition of some of these translations will now be provided.

The *JB* (1966) is a Roman Catholic version produced in England by a team of the British Catholic Biblical Association under the direction of Alexander Jones of Christ's College, Liverpool. *JB* bears a complicated relationship to its French counterpart. The introductions and copious footnotes represent a direct translation from the French, while the text itself is mostly a direct translation from the original languages with a simultaneous comparison with the French where questions of variant reading or interpretation arose. Some portions, however, were originally translated from the French, and the resultant translation was then compared with the original Greek or Hebrew texts. The English translators adhered to the textual basis, established by the French, and in most instances this also applied to the interpretation in the French version, although there are occasional deviations. The desire was to translate the Bible into "contemporary" English. In the Old Testament, *JB* departs frequently from the Massoretic Text and relies in many instances on the Septuagint. Ecclesiasticus was translated from the Greek text; Hebrew variants are relegated to the footnotes. The translation represents a sober, modern and critical study as well as a distinctively Christian position, as indicated in the notes to Genesis 3:15 and Isaiah 7:14. Isaiah 7:14 is rendered as "The maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son", to which the following comment is attached:

The Greek version reads "the virgin", being more explicit than the Hebrew which uses *almah*, meaning either a young girl or a young newly married woman.

Proper names are written according to the *RSV* tradition and not in the traditional Catholic manner. The divine name is given as "Yahweh".

The archaic forms of the second person pronouns are avoided. Old Testament passages in Hebrew poetry are printed as verse in English, and some of them achieve a high level of quality as free verse. The lines with fewer stresses in the Hebrew are indented. As expected, the books of the Apocrypha are scattered among the Historical Books, the Wisdom Books, and the Prophets instead of in a separate section. The *JB* breaks from Jerome's *Vulgate* and is the first complete Roman Catholic Bible translated into English from the original languages. It is also the first to take major advantage of the Dead Sea Scrolls. *JB* is acceptable to a vast audience.

The *NEB* resulted from a decision by Protestant churches in Great Britain not to participate in the revision of the *RSV* but that work should commence on an entirely new translation, which made no attempt to confine itself within the tradition of the *KJV* (Barr 1974: 381-405; Lewis 1981:129-163). The translators were therefore free to render the original text into contemporary English, free of the language of the earlier versions. Moreover, they did not hesitate to abandon the grammatical constructions of the original languages and avoid Hebraisms. Three classes of readers were considered: the vast majority of the population outside the communication ambit of the church, who found traditional versions unintelligible; the younger generation, and the "intelligent people who do attend church", but for whom the traditional language of the Bible became too familiar, thus losing its impact (Bruce 1978:237-240; Coleman 1989; Kubo & Specht 1983: 198-212). Three translating panels, one each for the Old Testament, New Testament and Apocrypha, were engaged on the project. There was also a literary panel, which read all the material and made suggestions to the translating panels. The joint committee, entrusted with the responsibility for the work, included representatives from the participating churches (roughly in proportion to their membership), from the Bible Societies, from the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge, and the conveners of the panels. Members of the panels were chosen on the basis of scholarly competence and not as representatives of denominations. An individual member of a translating panel would produce the draft of a biblical book and circulate it in type-script among the members of the panel. The panel would then meet to discuss the draft sentence by sentence. The amended draft was re-

typed and passed to the literary panel for scrutiny to determine whether the tone and level of the language were appropriate to that particular type of biblical writing. Reinterpretation of Hebrew words occurs in terms of derivation from roots preserved in other Semitic languages. Some of these derivations are based on Ugaritic, but many traced back to their Arabic roots. Contrary to the findings of modern linguistics, the *NEB* translators assumed that cognate words retain identical semantic components in separate languages, when in fact they are found often in totally different semantic domains. The *NEB* as a whole reflects the main stream of British biblical scholarship in the first quarter of post-World War II century. The result of this effort was the *NEB*, published in 1970 and revised in 1989 (*REB*).

In 1943 the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* enabled translators to turn directly to the original languages. The decisions of the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s enabled Protestant scholars to join the committee, making this a truly ecumenical work. The *NAB* was published in 1970 being the first American Catholic Bible translated from the original languages (Barr 1974:381-405; Bruce 1978:204-205; Lewis 1981:215-228; Kubo & Specht 1983:213-221). The translation, accomplished by a team of more than 60 scholars (including five Protestant scholars), relied heavily on the Masoretic Text for the Old Testament translation and on the Nestle-Aland 25<sup>th</sup> edition of the New Testament with some use of the United Bible Societies' Greek version of the New Testament. The duration of the work, however, caused inconsistent style and interpretation. Some books were thoroughly revised. Individual scholars prepared the draft of the book or books assigned to them, causing some distinctive features of style or interpretation despite the final editing. The OT translators used their best critical judgement in evaluating the textual data, and in many instances preferred the evidence of the ancient versions, in particular the Septuagint and Masoretic Text. The Dead Sea Scrolls were used extensively including some scroll material not yet published. The style is modern but formal, with an occasional archaism, although archaic pronouns and verb forms have been eliminated. As far as style is concerned, it was a basic principle of the translators to employ the same level of usage found in the Hebrew or Greek texts of each part of the Bible, and not smooth out features objectionable to modern taste.

Hebrew poetry was translated as poetry, and vast sections of the Gospel of John are printed as verse. Taking *NAB* as a whole, the translators were successful in finding appropriate English equivalents at a formal and solemn level. The *NAB* is written in paragraphs with verse numbers embedded in the text. The translation has been commended for its readability and is intended to serve various purposes — liturgy, study, devotion as well as reading at home.

*Today's English Version (TEV)* (known as the *Good News Bible [GNB]*) (1976) was commissioned by the American Bible Society to be a modern translation with language that could be readily understood by any reader of English, regardless of the his/her education (Lewis 1981:261-291; Kubo & Specht 1983:171-197). There was a demand for a translation specifically designed for those who speak English as an acquired language. It was published in what is termed common language (the overlap between the literary and the colloquial) in order to reach a largely secular constituency beyond the Church. This was the first English translation to make consistent use of advances in general linguistics and in translation theory. The translation was completed for publication in 1976. The draft of the entire New Testament was prepared by Robert G. Bratcher, a professional translator and translation consultant, and reviewed by a panel of scholars. Serious work on the Old Testament began in 1969. Bratcher was chairperson of a committee of six, all of whom had professional experience in translating. Each member prepared a draft of the books assigned to him by the committee; the draft, with extensive notes explaining the translation, was circulated to the committee members who ultimately met to scrutinise the translation in detail. Translators were chosen not as representatives from any denomination, but on the basis of concurrence with the principles of the project and professional experience. Their translation theory was based on the scholarship of Eugene A. Nida and the product exhibits a dynamic equivalence translation with great emphasis on effective and accurate communication. The basic principle underlying the choice of vocabulary, sentence structure, discourse structure, and other features of English style was that the translators should find the closest natural equivalent in English.

The most successful modern language version reflecting a conservative theological outlook is the *New International Version (NIV)* pu-

blished by Zondervan Bible Publishers in 1978 (Lewis 1981:293-328; Kubo & Specht 1983:243-272). Conservative Protestants were dissatisfied with existing modern language translations. Originating in the initiatives of committees from the Christian Reformed Church and the National Association of Evangelicals, the New York Bible Society (now the International Bible Society) assumed responsibility for the proposed translation and appointed a committee of fifteen scholars to oversee it (Barker 1999:17-21). They organised the translation and gave their final approval. The purpose of the version was “to do for our time what the King James Version did for its day.” The translation was to be faithful to the original languages and avoid paraphrasing; to be acceptable to both British and American readers, and to be as effective for public worship as for private study. This 1978 translation was the work of over one hundred scholars. The translation was done in a more decentralised fashion than that of any other recent project, but supervision was tightly controlled. Twenty teams of five each were organised: two co-translators, two translation consultants, and one English stylist. Each team was assigned a specific section of Scripture, and their work went to the intermediate editorial committee for Old Testament or New Testament, respectively. After review, the material was scrutinised by a general editorial committee, and then by the committee of fifteen who belonged to over a dozen evangelical Christian denominations. The publishers stress the transdenominational and international character of the *NIV*. There are few remnants from the *KJV-RSV* tradition of language. The style is dignified and somewhat stilted reflecting literary rather than spoken English. The *NIV* is a kind of hybrid as far as the theory of translation is concerned. In a number of passages it endeavours towards clarity of statement, and consequently uses present-day language, but in passages which are well known by a conservative constituency there is a tendency to revert to traditional terminology, even when it is misleading. For example, in Psalm 1:1 “the counsel of the wicked” is likely to be heard as “the council of the wicked” and “stand in the way of sinners” means in present-day English “to prevent sinners from doing or going some place,” while in fact the Hebrew refers to “close association with sinners.” The response to the *NIV*’s readability and format policies has been favourable.

As the *RV* played a significant role in pressing the Jewish community for a new Jewish translation, the publication of the *RSV* in 1952 had a similar effect. The Jewish communities of the United States and Canada were eager for a new translation. The communities were no longer the relatively small and insecure collection of recent arrivals from an inhospitable Europe. A sovereign Jewish State was in the offing. The number of North American Jews increased and achieved a level of security, prosperity, and sophistication unprecedented in the more than two millennia of Diaspora. This community would not be satisfied with another revision along the lines that its Christian counterparts were planning and producing. Nothing short of an entirely new translation of the Hebrew text was acceptable. To replace its English translation of 1917, the Jewish Publication Society started in 1955 to work on a totally new translation which would be intelligible in diction and make full use of older commentaries, especially those of medieval Jewish scholars. Translation was commenced by a committee of seven. The new Jewish version offered the reader in idiomatic, modern English what the original Hebrew author had originally meant to convey to his audience, rather than a literal translation. The translation reads smoothly and is free of expressions that are too difficult to grasp. In instances where the context requires additional words omitted from the Hebrew text, a paraphrase is used, but the additional words are bracketed. The completed product was published in one volume in 1985 (5740), entitled *Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Kubo & Specht 1983: 117-143).

#### 4.2 Revisions

Since 1990 various kinds of revisions and variations of the main versions have been published: the *New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)* (1985); the *Revised English Bible (REB)* (1989) (the revision of the *NEB*); the *New King James Version (NKJV)* (1982); the *NASB* (1971); the *New American Bible (NAB)*; *New Testament* (1987), and the *NRSV* (1990).

In an age of prolific Bible publication, with versions to serve every taste and to suit every need, several developments may be observed. The considerable expense involved in producing a major translation is a valid argument in favour of a revision, for example, as in the case of

the American *RSV* and the British *NEB*. The better understanding of the original textual bases was less of a consideration. The drive for change stems from monetary considerations, personal interests, as well as social and linguistic trends (Daniell 2003:735). They were grand American productions, the salaried work of large, well-funded comfortable committees with adequate secretarial support, massive publicity and marketing organisations and claims of gigantic print-runs and sales. Some of these seek to serve the needs of specific population groups: children, youth, women, Christian converts and speakers of dialects. The Bible should not be disturbing for these large groups of consumers. There have been attempts to produce paraphrase translations, translations concerned primarily with translation meaning, translations reflecting contemporary Biblical scholarship, and translations using inclusive language to reduce the sexist language of the Biblical text.

#### 4.3 Simplified versions and paraphrases

Simplified versions and paraphrases are translations with communication as its primary function, usually a rewriting of an existing translation in a modern vernacular by a single translator/editor. For example the *Living Bible, Paraphrased (LB)* (1967, 1971) by Kenneth Taylor, used the *ASV* of 1901 as source. *The Reader's Digest Bible* (1982) by Bruce M. Metzger is a condensation of the *RSV* (1952). *The Contemporary English Version* (1995) by Barclay M. Newman as editor was an exception. It was translated directly from the original texts, and is not a paraphrase or modernisation of any existing traditional version. Since more people hear the Bible read than read it themselves, Newman and his colleagues aimed to listen carefully for the way in which each word in their version would be understood when read out aloud.

The vocabulary and language structures of the eminently readable versions reflect the language usage of the average person. This results in simplified versions at a reading level of third or fourth grade, intended as a stepping stone to the more formal/traditional versions. For example *The New International Reader's Version* (1996/1998) is a simplified version intended as a stepping stone to the *New International Version*. The translators were most sensitive to gender-inclusive wording. For example, the term "brothers" is rendered as "brothers and sisters".

In *The Message* (1993, 1997, 2000), Eugene Peterson refrained from choosing simple English words, but words which forcefully convey the meaning to the reader, for example “addendum”, “consummate”, “embryonic”. He often dissociated passages from their first-century Mediterranean context so that Jesus, for example, sounds like a twentieth-century American speaker. In Matthew 5:47 Jesus says, “If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.”

One salient feature of these versions appears to be their usage of interpretive selection. Every instance where the Hebrew or Greek texts are ambiguous, one view is adopted and rendered clearly. True paraphrase involves not only the modernised English equivalent of what is in the text itself, but introduces something which is not there in order to elucidate the meaning of what is there.

In some instances an abbreviated, simplified, and readable summary of the contents of the entire biblical text is provided, for example *Reader's Digest Bible* (1982). The aim was to produce a shortened, clear text, while keeping the essence of the familiar language. The Old Testament was thus shortened by 50 percent and the New Testament by 25. Some texts such as the Ten Commandments, Psalm 23, etc., were not modified. A volume consisting of 767 pages with one column of text to a page was published.

The sales of these paraphrases are considerable. In the mid-1970s the *Living Bible, Paraphrased* captured 46% of the total sales of the Bible in the USA. By the end of the twentieth century, it had been translated into nearly one hundred languages and 40 million copies had been printed. In 1996 Tyndale House Publishers re-issued it as the *Holy Bible. New Living Translation (NLT)*.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The slow, ongoing modification of the English language; the adoption of a particular style and level of English diction suited to a particular age-group or reading public, and the textual, lexical, literary and grammatical problems of the source texts have a bearing on the English versions of the twentieth century (Metzger 2001:186-190). The twentieth century has emerged as a major period of Bible trans-



lation and publication. The *KJV*, a revision in the Tyndale tradition, was crucial to the official English translation of the Bible during the first part of the twentieth century. The *ASV* failed to replace the *KJV*. The independent modern speech versions of the first half of the twentieth century accustomed the reading public to Scriptures in the modern English vernacular. In the second part of the twentieth-century American versions of the Bible played an increasingly important role. A primary concern for meaning and readability has influenced the trend to produce translations that reflect dynamic equivalence rather than formal equivalence, for example the *TEV*. The strong voices of the major religious traditions sought to continue the achievements by such American translations as the *RSV*, the *NAB*, and the *NJPS*. At the same time, there were attempts both to produce translations supporting the theological views of particular segments of a religious tradition (e.g., the *NIV*) and to find a common Bible translation that surmounts the differences between religious traditions (e.g., the experiments with an edition of the *RSV* acceptable for use by both Catholics and Protestants). The cost involved in producing a major translation weighed heavily in favour of more versions which are revisions of revisions (e.g., the case of the American *RSV* and the British *NEB*).

What about the future for English Bible translation? There are three critical phases in our development: an orality phase before the invention of printing; a printing/written/reading phase, and a video phase (since the 1960s) with the emphasis on the visual (Newman *et al.* 1996:72). A new territory for English Bible translation will be the creation of visual Bibles: not merely fixed-video-camera recordings of someone reading the Bible, but many animated re-creations of Bible stories. On the one hand, the visual will become increasingly important in printed Bibles as well as in Bible translation as stated in the preface of the *CEV* (1995). The *CEV* has been described as a “user-friendly” and “mission-driven” translation that can be read aloud without stumbling, heard without misunderstanding, and listened to with enjoyment and appreciation, because the style is lucid and lyrical. These aspects are important and omitted in most translations of the twentieth century. However, a shift can be expected from the language of the *New York Times*, which characterised the language usage in many of the English Bible translations in the second half of the twentieth century, i.e. by sup-

pressing the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text, assimilating it to dominant values in the target-language culture, making it familiar and therefore ostensibly original. It creates the impression that Bible personalities share the same popular culture as its readers. Therefore, the new trend in Bible translation will be to instil a new sensitivity among readers to the socio-cultural distance between them and the original contexts of the Bible.

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