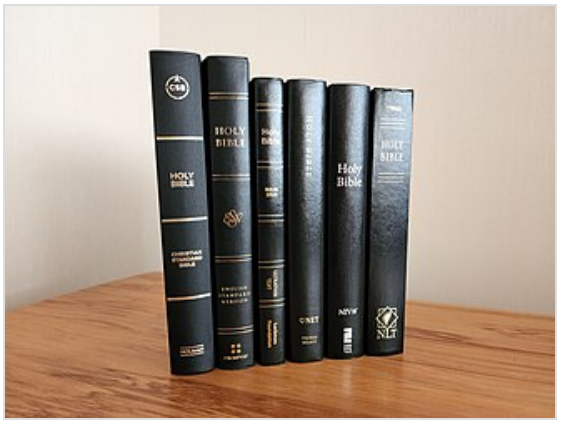
# Bible translations

The Christian Bible has been translated into many languages from the biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. As of November 2024 the whole Bible has been translated into 756 languages, the New Testament has been translated into an additional 1,726 languages, and smaller portions of the Bible have been translated into 1,274 other languages. Thus, at least some portions of the Bible have been translated into 3,756 languages.[1]

Textual variants in the New Testament include errors, omissions, additions, changes, and alternate translations. In some cases, different translations have been used as evidence for or have been motivated by doctrinal differences.



A selection of Bible translations in contemporary English

## Original text

### Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible was mainly written in Biblical Hebrew, with some portions (notably in Daniel and Ezra) in Biblical Aramaic. Some of the Deuterocanonical books not accepted in every denomination's canons, such as 2 Maccabees, originated in Koine Greek.

In the third and second centuries B.C.E., the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Koine Greek, known as the Septuagint version. This was the version commonly used by the writers of the Gospels.

From the 6th century to the 10th century AD, Jewish scholars, today known as Masoretes, compared the text of various biblical manuscripts in an effort to create a unified, standardized text. A series of highly similar texts eventually emerged, and any of these texts are known as Masoretic Texts (MT). The Masoretes also added vowel points (called niqqud) to the text, since the original text contained only consonants. This sometimes required the selection of an interpretation; since some words differ only in their vowels their meaning can vary in accordance with the vowels chosen. In antiquity, variant Hebrew readings existed, some of which have survived in the Samaritan Pentateuch and other ancient fragments, as well as being attested in ancient versions in other languages.[2]

### New Testament

The New Testament was written in Koine Greek[3] reporting speech originally in Aramaic, Greek and Latin (see Language of the New Testament).

The *autographs*, the Greek manuscripts written by the original authors or collators, have not survived. Scholars surmise the original Greek text from the manuscripts that do survive.

Most variants among the manuscripts are minor, such as alternative spelling, alternative word order, the presence or absence of an optional definite article ("the"), and so on. Occasionally, a major variant happens when a portion of a text was missing or for other reasons. Examples of major variants are the endings of Mark, the Pericope Adulteræ, the Comma Johanneum, and the Western version of Acts.

Early manuscripts of the Pauline epistles and other New Testament writings show no punctuation whatsoever.[4][5] The punctuation was added later by other editors, according to their own understanding of the text.

Four main textual traditions of the Greek New Testament have been theorized to allow grouping and analysis of manuscripts and changes: the Alexandrian text-type, the Byzantine text-type, the Western text-type and perhaps a largely lost Caesarean text-type, however many manuscripts are mixes of these.

The discovery of older manuscripts which belong to the Alexandrian text-type, including the 4th-century Codex Vaticanus and Codex Sinaiticus, led scholars to revise their view about the original Greek text. Karl Lachmann based his critical edition of 1831 on manuscripts dating from the 4th century and earlier, to argue that the *Textus Receptus* must be corrected according to these earlier texts.

There is also a long-standing tradition owing to Papias of Hierapolis (c.125) that the Gospel of Matthew was originally in Hebrew.[6] Eusebius (c.300) reports that Pantaenus went to India (c. 200) and found them using a Gospel of St Matthew in Hebrew letters.[7] Jerome also reports in his preface to St Matthew that it was originally composed "in Hebrew letters in Judea" not in Greek[8] and that he saw and copied one from the Nazarene sect. The exact provenance, authorship, source languages and collation of the four Gospels is unknown but subject to much academic speculation and disputed methods.

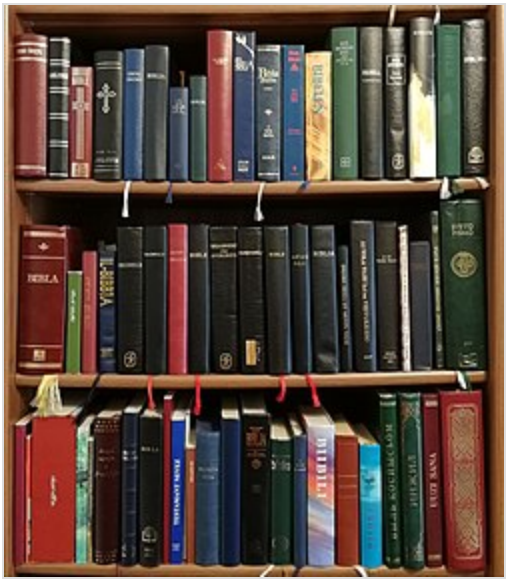
# History

## Ancient translations

### Aramaic Targums

Some of the first translations of the Torah began during the Babylonian exile, when Aramaic became the lingua franca of the Jews. With most people speaking only Aramaic and not understanding Hebrew, the Targums were created to allow the common person to understand the Torah as it was read in ancient synagogues.

### Greek Septuagint


Collection of Bibles and New Testaments in several languages

By the 3rd century BC, Alexandria had become the center of Hellenistic Judaism, and during the 3rd to 2nd centuries BC translators compiled in Egypt a Koine Greek version of the Hebrew scriptures in several stages (completing the task by 132 BC). The Talmud ascribes the translation effort to Ptolemy II Philadelphus (r. 285–246 BC), who allegedly hired 72 Jewish scholars for the purpose, for which reason the translation is commonly known as the Septuagint (from the Latin *septuaginta*, "seventy"), a name which it gained in "the time of Augustine of Hippo" (354–430 AD).[9][10] The Septuagint (LXX), the very first translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, later became the accepted text of the Old Testament in the Christian church and the basis of its canon. Jerome based his Latin Vulgate translation on the Hebrew for those books of the Bible preserved in the Jewish canon (as reflected in the Masoretic text), and on the Greek text for the deuterocanonical books.

The translation now known as the Septuagint was widely used by Greek-speaking Jews, and later by Christians.[11] It differs somewhat from the later standardized Hebrew (Masoretic Text). This translation was promoted by way of a legend (primarily recorded as the Letter of Aristeas) that seventy (or in some sources, seventy-two) separate translators all produced identical texts; supposedly proving its accuracy.[12]

Versions of the Septuagint contain several passages and whole books not included in the Masoretic texts of the Tanakh. In some cases these additions were originally composed in Greek, while in other cases they are translations of Hebrew books or of Hebrew variants not present in the Masoretic texts. Recent discoveries have shown that more of the Septuagint additions have a Hebrew origin than previously thought. While there are no complete surviving manuscripts of the Hebrew texts on which the Septuagint was based, many scholars believe that they represent a different textual tradition ("Vorlage") from the one that became the basis for the Masoretic texts.[2]

## Late Antiquity

The books collected as the Christian New Testament were written in Koine Greek.[a] In the view of many scholars, the Gospels may have collected oral apostolic tradition rather than being simply dictated.[13]

The proto-canonical books of the Old Testament were available in two sources: Hebrew and the Greek Septuagint translation. Since Jerome, Christian translations of the Old Testament (except the Psalms) tend to be derived from the Hebrew texts, though some denominations prefer the Greek texts (or may cite variant readings from both). Modern Bible translations incorporating modern textual criticism usually begin with the Masoretic text, but also take into account possible variants from all available ancient versions.

### 2nd century

Origen's *Hexapla* (c. 235) placed side by side six versions of the Old Testament: the Hebrew consonantal text, the Hebrew text transliterated into Greek letters (the *Secunda*), the Greek translations of Aquila of Sinope and Symmachus the Ebionite, one recension of the Septuagint, and the Greek translation of Theodotion. In addition, he included three anonymous translations of the Psalms (the *Quinta*, *Sexta* and *Septima*). His eclectic recension of the Septuagint had a significant influence on the Old Testament text in several important manuscripts.

In the 2nd century, the Old Testament was translated into Syriac translation, and the Gospels in the Diatessaron gospel harmony. The New Testament was translated in the 5th century, now known as the Peshitta.

In the 2nd and 3rd centuries, the New Testament was translated into various Coptic (Egyptian) dialects. The Old Testament was already translated by that stage.

### 3rd century

The Frankfurt silver inscription, dated to between 230 and 270, quotes Philippians 2:10-11 in a Latin translation. It is the earliest reliable evidence of Christianity north of the Alps.[14]

### 4th century

In 331, the Emperor Constantine commissioned Eusebius to deliver fifty Bibles for the Church of Constantinople. Athanasius (*Apol. Const. 4*) recorded Alexandrian scribes around 340 preparing Bibles for Constans. Little else is known, though there is plenty of speculation. For example, it is speculated that this may have provided motivation for canon lists, and that Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209, Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus are examples of these Bibles. Together with the Peshitta, these are the earliest extant Christian Bibles.[15]

The Bible was translated into Gothic (an early East Germanic language) in the 4th century by a group of scholars, possibly under the supervision of Ulfilas (Wulfila).[16][17]

Canon (i.e. Item) 59 of the Synod of Laodicea in 363 specified that uncanonical books should not be read in church. Canon 60, whose authenticity is disputed,[18] then supplied a canon similar to that given by Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem's catechesis in 350: both lacked the Book of Revelation. The canon of Athanasius of Alexandria in 367 added Revelation in his thirty-ninth Festal Letter. All three included the so-called deuterocanonical books of Baruch and Lamentations.

Jerome's *Vulgate* Latin translation dates to between AD 382 and 405. Latin translations predating Jerome are collectively known as *Vetus Latina* texts. Jerome began by revising these earlier Latin translations, but ended by going back to the original Greek, bypassing all translations, and going back to the original Hebrew wherever he could instead of the Septuagint.

There are also several ancient translations, most important of which are in the Syriac dialect of Aramaic (including the Peshitta).

### 4th to 6th century

The Codex Vaticanus dates to c. 325–350, and is missing only 21 sentences or paragraphs in various New Testament books: it is one of the four great uncial codices. The earliest surviving complete single-volume manuscript of the entire Bible in Latin is the Codex Amiatinus, a Latin Vulgate edition produced in 8th-century England at the double monastery of Wearmouth-Jarrow. Latin and its early Romance dialects were widely spoken as the primary or secondary language throughout Western Europe, including Britain even in the 700s and 800s.[19]

Between the 4th to 6th centuries, the Bible was translated into Ge'ez (Ethiopic).

In the 5th century, Mesrob Mashtots translated the Bible using the Armenian alphabet invented by him.[20] Also dating from the same period is the first Georgian translation. The creation of the Georgian scripts, like the Armenian alphabet, was also attributed to Mashtots by the scholar Koryun in the 5th century.[21] This claim has been disputed by modern Georgian scholars, although the creation of a Georgian alphabet was likely still motivated by Christians who wished to translate holy scriptures.[22]

In the 6th century, the Bible was translated into Old Nubian.

By the end of the eighth century, Church of the East monasteries (so-called Nestorians) had translated the New Testament and Psalms (at least, the portions needed for liturgical use) from Syriac to Sogdian,[23] the *lingua franca* in Central Asia of the Silk Road,[24] which was an Eastern Iranian language with Chinese loanwords, written in letters and logograms derived from Aramaic script. They may have also translated parts of books into a Chinese.

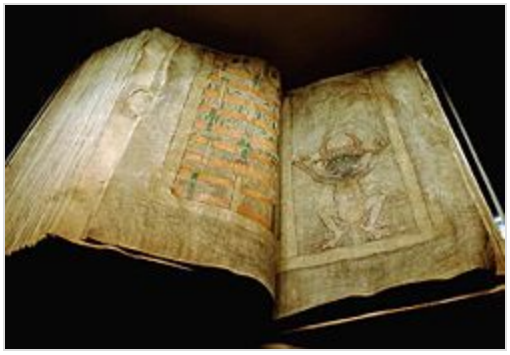
## Middle Ages

Before the advent of the printing press and mass literacy, medieval vernacular translation of scriptural texts was mainly and necessarily mediated,[25] and oral, memorized,[26] extemporized or versified. The Western Catholic church utilized Latin as a pan-European *lingua franca* for liturgical, and scholarly use. Local efforts sporadically provided vernacular translations in major national languages,[27] however personal study of the Bible does not necessarily occupy the same urgent role in lay Catholic life and devotion as it does in e.g. *sola scriptura*-style Protestantism: "the Christian faith is not a 'religion of the book.'"[28]

### Early Middle Ages

When ancient scribes copied earlier books, they wrote notes on the margins of the page (*marginal glosses*) to correct their text—especially if a scribe accidentally omitted a word or line—and to comment about the text. When later scribes were copying the copy, they were sometimes uncertain if a note was intended to be included as part of the text. See textual criticism. Over time, different regions evolved different versions, each with its own assemblage of omissions, additions, and variants (mostly in orthography).

There are some fragmentary Old English Bible translations, notably a lost translation of the Gospel of John into Old English by the Venerable Bede, which is said to have been prepared shortly before his death around the year 735. An Old High German version of the Gospel of Matthew dates to 748.



The Codex Gigas from the 13th century, held at the Royal Library in Sweden

Charlemagne in c. 800 charged Alcuin with a revision of the Latin Vulgate. The translation into Old Church Slavonic was started in 863 by Cyril and Methodius.

Alfred the Great, a ruler in England, had a number of passages of the Bible circulated in the vernacular in around 900. These included passages from the Ten Commandments and the Pentateuch, which he prefixed to a code of laws he promulgated around this time. In approximately 990, a full and freestanding version of the four Gospels in idiomatic Old English appeared, in the West Saxon dialect; these are called the *Wessex Gospels*. Around the same time, a compilation now called the *Old English Hexateuch* appeared with the first six (or, in one version, seven) books of the Old Testament.

### High Middle Ages

The arrival of the mendicant preaching orders in the 12th century saw individual books being translated with commentary, in Italian dialects.[29]

Typically the Psalms were among the first books to be translated, being prayers: for example, the earliest Polish translation from 1280.

There are numerous manuscripts of the Psalms in Catalan from the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, translated from the Vulgate, Occitan, French and Hebrew, with a New Testament and full Bible translation made in the 1300s.[30] Parts of an Old Testament in Old Spanish from the late 1300s still exist.[31]

Monks completed a translation into Franco-Provençal (Arpitan) c.1170-85, commissioned by Peter Waldo. The complete Bible was translated into Old French in the late 13th century. Parts of this translation were included in editions of the popular *Bible historiale*, and there is no evidence of this translation's being suppressed by the Church.[32] In England, "about the middle of the fourteenth century—before 1361—the Anglo-Normans possessed an independent and probably complete translation of the whole of the Old Testament and the greater part of the New."[33]:xvii

Friar Giovanni da Montecorvino of the large Franciscan mission to Mongol China in the early 1300s translated the Psalms and New Testament into the language of the Tartars: the Uyghur language or perhaps the Mongolian language.[34]

A royal Swedish version of 1316 has been lost. The entire Bible was translated into Czech around 1360.

The provincial synods of Toulouse (1229) and Tarragona (1234) temporarily outlawed possession of some vernacular renderings, in reaction to the Cathar and Waldensian heresies, in South France and Catalonia. This demonstrates that such translations existed: there is evidence of some vernacular translations being permitted while others were being scrutinized.

### Late Middle Ages

A group of Middle English Bible translations were created: including the Wycliffean Bibles (1383, 1393) and the Paues' New Testament, based on the Vulgate. New translation efforts were regulated in England by the provincial Oxford Synod in 1408 under church law to require the approval of a bishop; possession of material that contained Lollard material (such as the so-called General Prologue found in a few Wycliffite Bibles) was also illegal by English state law, in response to Lollard uprisings.

Later, many parts of the Bible in Late Middle English were printed by William Caxton in his translation of the Golden Legend (1483), and in the loose paraphrase *Speculum Vitae Christi* (*The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*), which had been authorized into English around 1410.

A Cornish version may have been made.[35]

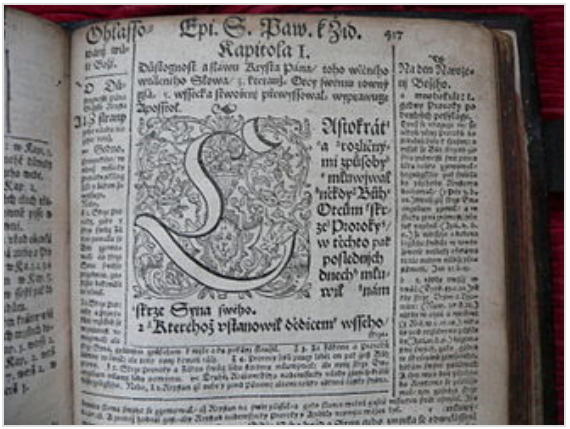
The Hungarian Hussite Bible appeared in 1416.

Individual books continued to be translated: for example the Gospel of John in Slovak (1469). The first 12 books of the Old Testament in Danish (also used for Norwegian) was made in c. 1480.

The invention of printing saw complete Catholic Bibles produced in German (1466 and after; multiple), Valencian Catalan (1478), Tuscan (1471), Venetian (1471) and Dutch (1477).[30]

From the late 1300s, the Brethren of the Common Life encouraged their laypeople to read the Gospels they would hear at church at home beforehand, in the vernacular.[36]:177 The early public demand for printed Dutch vernacular scriptures seems to have been for translations of the daily or weekly liturgical readings, and most printed books were of this *Gospels and Epistles* type; from the 1520s this reverted to a demand for pandect (full) Bibles.[b]

## Reformation and Early Modern period



Czech Protestant Bible of Kralice (1593)

In the early 1500s there were several independent scholarly Catholic efforts to produce polyglot editions of the bible or updated Latin translations: these included the Complutensian Polyglot sponsored by Castillian Archbishop Ximénez at his new University of Alcalá de Henares, Augustinian canon Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum omne* (New Testament only) sponsored mainly by English bishops, and Italian Dominican friar Santes Pagnino's *Veteris et Novi Testamenti nova translatio* eventually sponsored by the Pope.

The earliest printed edition of the Greek New Testament appeared in 1516 from the Froben press, by Desiderius Erasmus, who reconstructed a Greek text from several recent manuscripts of the Byzantine text-type, to accompany his Latin revision and philological annotations. This led to a gradual shift by subsequent translators away from Latin sources to Greek or Hebrew sources, though initially his Latin renditions and annotations were more influential. Erasmus produced four revised editions.

During 1517 and 1519 Catholic layman Francysk Skaryna printed a translation of the Bible in Old Belarusian language in twenty-two books.[37]

In 1521, fiery former friar Martin Luther was placed under the Ban of the Empire, and he hid in the Wartburg Castle. During his time there, he quickly translated the New Testament into German, using the 2nd edition of Erasmus' New Testament, which provide a new Latin translation, detailed annotations on Greek words, and a Greek text for reference.[38] It was printed in September 1522. It was a freer but more idiomatic translation than the numerous other German translations in print, which were often intended as aids to following the Latin Vulgate and so more literal but less idiomatic.

The first complete Dutch Bible, partly based on the existing portions of Luther's translation, was printed in Antwerp in 1526 by Jacob van Liesvelt.[39] Early Protestant translations into Germanic languages, such as the Dutch, Swedish, Danish/Norwegian, Icelandic, Swiss German, Middle Low German and to some extent the English, were based in Luther's Early New High German translation with Erasmus' Latin annotations rather than all from the Greek directly.

The first printed edition with *critical apparatus* (noting variant readings among the manuscripts) was produced by the printer Robert Estienne of Paris in 1550. The Greek text of this edition and of those of Erasmus became known as the *Textus Receptus* (Latin for "received text"), a name given to it in the Elzevier edition of 1633, which termed it as the text *nunc ab omnibus receptum* ("now received by all").

The use of numbered chapters and verses was not introduced until the Middle Ages and later. The system used in English was developed by Stephanus (Robert Estienne of Paris). (See Chapters and verses of the Bible.)

The churches of the Protestant Reformation translated the Greek of the Textus Receptus to produce vernacular Bibles, such as the German Luther Bible (1522), the Polish Brest Bible (1563), the Spanish "Biblia del Oso" (in English: Bible of the Bear, 1569) which later became the Reina-Valera Bible upon its first revision in 1602, the Czech Melantrich Bible (1549) and Bible of Kralice (1579–1593) and numerous English translations of the Bible.

Tyndale's New Testament translation (1526, revised in 1534, 1535 and 1536) and his translation of the Pentateuch (1530, 1534) and the Book of Jonah were met with heavy sanctions given the widespread belief that Tyndale *changed* the Bible as he attempted to translate it. Tyndale's unfinished work, cut short by his execution, was supplemented by Myles Coverdale and published under a pseudonym to create the Matthew Bible, the first complete English translation of the Bible. Attempts at an "authoritative" English Bible for the Church of England would include the Great Bible of 1538 (also relying on Coverdale's work), the Bishops' Bible of 1568, and the Authorized Version (the King James Version) of 1611, the last of which would become a standard for English speaking Christians for several centuries.

The first complete French Bible printed was a translation by Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, published in 1530 in Antwerp.[40] The Froschauer Bible of 1531 and the Luther Bible of 1534 (both appearing in portions throughout the 1520s) were an important part of the Reformation.

By 1578 both Old and New Testaments were translated to Slovene by the Protestant writer and theologian Jurij Dalmatin. The work was not printed until 1583. The Slovenes thus became the 12th nation in the world with a complete Bible in their language. The translation of the New Testament was based on the work by Dalmatin's mentor, the Protestant Primož Trubar, who published the translation of the Gospel of Matthew already in 1555 and the entire Testament by parts until 1577.

Following the distribution of a Welsh New Testament and Prayer Book to every parish Church in Wales in 1567, translated by William Salesbury, Welsh became the 13th language into which the whole Bible had been translated in 1588, through a translation by William Morgan then vicar of Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant (later Bishop of Llandaf and St Asaph.[41][42]

In 1613, Jesuits in Kyoto published a lectionary of the Sunday Gospel readings and other Gospel material in Japanese; this is now lost.

Samuel Bogusław Chyliński (1631–1668) translated and published the first Bible translation into Lithuanian.[43]

In 1660, John Eliot published the Eliot Indian Bible in the language of the Massachusett people, an indigenous American group who lived in the area around what is today Boston, Massachusetts. This was the first translation of the Bible into an indigenous American language. This translation was produced by Eliot in an effort to convert the dwindling population of Massachusett to Christianity in praying towns such as Natick, Massachusetts.

In 1671, a complete Bible translation into Arabic was made in Rome. In 1671, the annual Gospel readings were translated by a Jesuit into Konkani, an Indian language.

## Modern translation efforts

The Bible is the most translated book in the world. The United Bible Societies announced that as of 31 December 2007[44] the complete Bible was available in 438 languages, 123 of which included the deuterocanonical material as well as the Tanakh and New Testament. Either the Tanakh or the New Testament was available in an additional 1,168 languages, in some kind of translations, like the interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme translation (e.g. some Parallel Bible, with interlinear morphemic glossing).

In 1999, Wycliffe Bible Translators announced *Vision 2025* — a project that intends to commence Bible translation in every remaining language community by 2025. It was realised that, at the rates of Bible translation at that point, it would take until at least 2150 until Bible translation began in every language that was needing a translation. Since the launch of Vision 2025, Bible translation efforts have increased dramatically, in large part due to the technology that is now available. By 2019, there had been a sustained reduction in the time it took to begin a new translation, and it was estimated that a new translation will begin in every language by 2038, thus being 112 years faster.[45] A new translation was beginning every 120 hours (5 days), and by 2025 it was estimated a new translation work was beginning every 14 hours.[46]

As of September 2023, they estimated that around 99.8 million people spoke those 1,268 languages where translation work still needs to begin. This represents 17.1% of all languages (based off an estimate of 7,394 total languages) and 1.3% of the human population (based on a global population of 7.42 billion). By April 2025, this had fallen to 801 languages.[46]

In total, there are 3,736 languages without any Bible translation at all, but an estimated 1,148 of these (with a population of 9.6 million people) are likely to never need a Bible because they are very similar to other languages, or spoken by very few speakers where the language will die out very soon.[1]

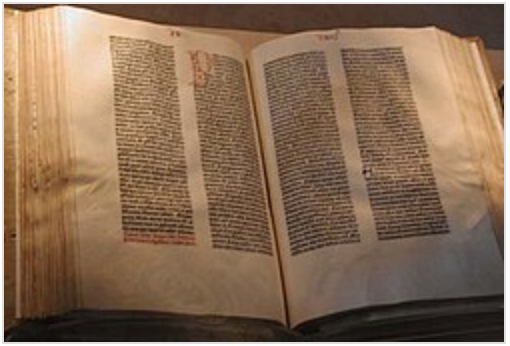
Bible translation is currently happening in 4,150 languages in 167 countries.[46] In November 2024, it was estimated that this work impacts 1.15 billion people, or about 15.5 percent of all language users, who have (or will soon have) new access to at least some portions of Scripture in their first language.[1] In April 2025, this had risen to 1.78 billion individuals (21% of the global population).[46]

Bible Translation Statistics (for selected years)

| Year | Full Bible | New Testament | Portions | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1996 | 308 | 764 | 1014 | 2086 |
| 2006 | 426 | 1114 | 862 | 2402 |
| 2010 | 457 | 1211 | 897 | 2565 |
| 2011 | 513 | 1276 | 1015 | 2804 |
| 2012 | 518 | 1275 | 1005 | 2798 |
| 2013 | 513 | 1309 | 1028 | 2850 |
| 2014 | 531 | 1329 | 1023 | 2883 |
| 2015 | 554 | 1333 | 1045 | 2932 |
| 2016 | 636 | 1442 | 1145 | 3223 |
| 2017 | 670 | 1521 | 1121 | 3312 |
| 2018 | 683 | 1534 | 1133 | 3350 |
| 2019 | 698 | 1548 | 1138 | 3384 |
| 2020 | 704 | 1551 | 1160 | 3415 |
| 2021 | 717 | 1582 | 1196 | 3495 |
| 2022 | 724 | 1617 | 1248 | 3589 |
| 2023 | 736 | 1658 | 1264 | 3658 |
| 2024 | 756 | 1726 | 1274 | 3756 |
| March 2025 | 771 | 1760 | 1356 | 3887 |

## Differences in Bible translations

Modern critical editions incorporate ongoing scholarly research, including discoveries of Greek papyrus fragments from near Alexandria, Egypt, that date in some cases within a few decades of the original New Testament writings.[47] Today, most critical editions of the Greek New Testament, such as UBS4 and NA27, consider the Alexandrian text-type corrected by papyri, to be the Greek text that is closest to the original *autographs*. Their *apparatus* includes the result of votes among scholars, ranging from certain {A} to doubtful {E}, on which variants best preserve the original Greek text of the New Testament.



This Gutenberg Bible is displayed by the United States Library of Congress

Critical editions that rely primarily on the Alexandrian text-type inform nearly all modern translations (and revisions of older translations). For reasons of tradition, however, some translators prefer to use the Textus Receptus for the Greek text, or use the *Majority Text* which is similar to it but is a critical

edition that relies on earlier manuscripts of the Byzantine text-type. Among these, some argue that the Byzantine tradition contains scribal additions, but these later interpolations preserve the orthodox interpretations of the biblical text—as part of the ongoing Christian experience—and in this sense are authoritative. Distrust of the textual basis of modern translations has contributed to the King-James-Only Movement.

## Dynamic or formal translation policy

A variety of linguistic, philological and ideological approaches to translation have been used. Inside the Bible-translation community, these are commonly categorized as:

- Dynamic equivalence translation
- Formal equivalence translation (similar to literal translation)
- Idiomatic, or paraphrastic translation, as used by the late Kenneth N. Taylor

though modern linguists, such as Bible scholar Dr. Joel Hoffman, disagree with this classification.[48]

Other translation approaches include:

- Literary translation, where the reader's experience of the piece as literature is prized, as used in the Knox Bible
- Metrical translation, where prose is rendered in a rhythmic form, as represented by Old English and Middle English texts
- Prose translation, where no attempt is made to render the lyrical aspect of some poem or song, as King Alfred's prose translation of the first fifty Psalms.[49]

As Hebrew and Greek, the original languages of the Bible, like all languages, have some idioms and concepts not easily translated, there is in some cases an ongoing critical tension about whether it is better to give a word-for-word translation, to give a translation that gives a parallel idiom in the target language, or to invent a neologism.

For instance, in the Douay Rheims Bible, Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, New American Bible Revised Edition, which are the English language Catholic translations, as well as Protestant translations like the King James Bible, the Darby Bible, the Recovery Version, the Literal Standard Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the Modern Literal Version, and the New American Standard Bible are seen as more literal translations (or "word-for-word").

Translations like the New International Version and New Living Translation sometimes attempt to give relevant parallel idioms. The Living Bible and The Message are two paraphrases of the Bible that try to convey the original meaning in contemporary language.

Less literal translations reflect the translator's theological, linguistic or cultural interpretations; the result is more easily consumed by lay readers. This contrasts with more literal translations where interpretation is left to the reader; lay readers may be unfamiliar with ancient idioms and other historical and cultural contexts.

### Doctrinal differences and translation policy

In addition to linguistic concerns, theological issues also drive Bible translations. Some translations of the Bible, produced by single churches or groups of churches, may be seen as subject to a point of view by the translation committee.

Historian David Lawton notes that the Middle Ages in the West, even up to the late period, "There is little or no sense that the Bible, even if seen as single or whole, should necessarily stand alone and self-sufficient. It is a period without fundamentalists in the modern sense."[50] The Bible was translated (usually from the Vulgate) in accordance with Catholic Sacred Tradition.

#### Names of God

For example, the New World Translation, produced by Jehovah's Witnesses, provides different renderings where verses in other Bible translations support the deity of Christ.[51] The NWT also translates *kurios* as "Jehovah" rather than "Lord" when quoting Hebrew passages that used YHWH. The authors believe that Jesus would have used God's name and not the customary *kurios*. On this basis, the anonymous New World Bible Translation Committee inserted *Jehovah* into the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures (New Testament) a total of 237 times while the New World Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) uses Jehovah a total of 6,979 times to a grand total of 7,216 in the entire 2013 Revision New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures while previous revisions such as the 1984 revision were a total of 7,210 times while the 1961 revision were a total of 7,199 times.[52]

A number of Sacred Name Bibles (e.g., the Sacred Scriptures Bethel Edition) have been published that are even more rigorous in transliterating the tetragrammaton using Semitic forms to translate it in the Old Testament and also using the same Semitic forms to translate the Greek word *Theos* (God) in the New Testament—usually Yahweh, Elohim or some other variation.

Other translations are distinguished by smaller but distinctive doctrinal differences. For example, the Purified Translation of the Bible, by translation and explanatory footnotes, promoting the position that Christians should not drink alcohol, that New Testament references to "wine" are translated as "grape juice".

## See also


**Ancient and classical translations**

- Early translations of the New Testament
- Targum and Peshitta (Aramaic)
- Greek versions of the Bible
- Vetus Latina and Vulgate (Latin versions)
- Syriac versions of the Bible
- Coptic versions of the Bible

**English translations**

- Bible translations into English

- Old English Bible translations
- Middle English Bible translations
  - Wycliffite Bible
- Early Modern English Bible translations
  - Tyndale Bible
- Modern English Bible translations
- List of English Bible translations

**Other languages**

- Bible translations by language

**Difficulties**

- Gender in Bible translation
- Translation § Fidelity and transparency

**Others**

- Bible version debate
- Byzantine text-type
- Bible concordance
- Exegesis
- Hermeneutics
- Institute for Bible Translation
- List of languages by year of first Bible translation
- Skopos theory
- Textus Receptus
- Textual variants in the New Testament
- Translation
- Bible names in their native languages

# Notes

a. Some scholars hypothesize that certain books (whether completely or partially) may have been written in Aramaic before being translated for widespread dissemination. One very famous example of this is the opening to the Gospel of John, which some scholars argue to be a Greek translation of an Aramaic hymn.

b. "On the basis of the analysis of hundreds of manuscripts containing Middle Dutch Bible translations we concluded in earlier studies that medieval people could read the complete Bible, but did not *want* to: they preferred to read liturgical lessons. [...] We may conclude, then, that readers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries preferred to read the Bible according to the liturgical reading schedule, and that is the reason they were printed that way from 1477 on."[36]:186

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5. http://www.stpaulsirvine.org/images/papyruslg.gif%7C shows an example of the text without punctuation
6. See also the Hebrew Gospel hypothesis.
7. which also could be Syriac.
8. "Jerome, Letter to Pope Damasus: Beginning of the Preface to the Gospels" (https://www.tertullian.org/fathers/jerome_preface_gospels.htm). *www.tertullian.org*.
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10. *The Canon Debate*, McDonald & Sanders editors, chapter by Sundberg, page 72, adds further detail: "However, it was not until the time of Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) that the Greek translation of the Jewish scriptures came to be called by the Latin term *septuaginta*. [70 rather than 72] Jerome began by revising the earlier Latin translations, but ended by going back to the original Greek, bypassing all translations, and going back to the original Hebrew wherever he could instead of the Septuagint. The New Testament and at least some of the Old Testament was translated into Gothic in the 4th century by Ulfilas. In the 5th century, Saint Mesrob translated the Bible into Armenian. Also dating from the same period are the Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic and Georgian translations. In his *City of God* 18.42, while repeating the story of Aristeas with typical embellishments, Augustine adds the remark, "It is their translation that it has now become traditional to call the Septuagint" ...[Latin omitted]... Augustine thus indicates that this name for the Greek translation of the scriptures was a recent development. But he offers no clue as to which of the possible antecedents led to this development: Exod 24:1–8 (https://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Exodus%2024:1–8&version=nrsv), Josephus [Antiquities 12.57, 12.86], or an elision. ...this name *Septuagint* appears to have been a fourth- to fifth-century development."
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# Further reading


- Wills, Garry, "A Wild and Indecent Book" (review of David Bentley Hart, *The New Testament: A Translation*, Yale University Press, 577 pp.), *The New York Review of Books*, vol. LXV, no. 2 (8 February 2018), pp. 34–35. Discusses some pitfalls in interpreting and translating the New Testament.
- Sharma, Sandeep (2018). "Chichewa and Hindi Back Translations of the Bible: A Comparative Check of Translation Techniques" (https://doi.org/10.54395%2Fjot-69624). *Journal of Translation*. **14** (1): 42–47. doi:10.54395/jot-69624 (https://doi.org/10.54395%2Fjot-69624).


# External links

- Repackaging the Bible (http://edition.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/wayoflife/12/24/repackaging.bible/index.html#cnnSTCText) by Eric Marrapodi, *CNN*, December 24, 2008
- Bible Versions and Translations (http://www.biblestudytools.com/bible-versions/) on BibleStudyTools.com
- Huge selection of Bibles in Foreign Languages – bibleinmylanguage.com (http://www.bibleinmylanguage.com/)
- BibleGateway.com (has many translations to select) (http://www.biblegateway.com/)