

TRANSLATIONS AND VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

I. EARLY TRANSLATIONS AND VERSIONS

A. Syriac Versions

1. Syriac
 - a. A Derivative of Aramaic (Christian Aramaic)
 - b. Spoken in Syria/Upper Mesopotamia, 3rd-13th cent. AD
 - c. Adiabene, East of Assyria, Converted to Judaism AD 40
2. **Diatessaron** (Greek = "through four" or "harmony of four")
 - a. A Harmony of the 4 Gospels; Woven into a single account
 - b. Produced by **Tatian**, an Assyrian Christian
 - 1) Disciple of Justin Martyr for a time in Rome
 - 2) Returned to Assyria (Adiabene?) ca. AD 140
 - c. Very Popular; Commentary on it Produced by Ephrem
3. **Peshitta**, or "Simple" Version, = Standard Syriac Bible
 - a. OT Translated from Hebrew, Perhaps by/for Jews
 - 1) Christians Adopted, Some Influence of LXX
 - 2) Complete by AD 400 (Theodore of Mopsuestia)
 - b. NT Revised by Rabbula; Bishop of Edessa (411-435)
 - 1) Conformed with Byzantine Greek Text
 - 2) Abolished **Old Syriac** Versions and Diatessaron
 - 3) Translated from Greek; English translation by G. Lamsa
 - c. Did not Include 2 Pet, 2-3 Jn, Jude, Rev until 508

B. Other Early Translations

1. Secondary translations from Syriac; revised from Greek
 - a. **Armenian**: Eastern Asia Minor; Armenia = 1st Christian nation
 - b. **Georgian**: In the Caucasus; perhaps translated from Armenian
2. **Coptic**: late form of Egyptian with Greek-based script
 - a. Sahidic dialect, Upper Egypt (3rd-4th cent)
 - b. Bohairic dialect, Lower Egypt: pure Alexandrian
3. **Ethiopic** (5th-7th cent): translated from Greek, some revision of OT from Hebrew
4. **Arabic** (13th cent): translated from Syriac, Coptic, and Greek
5. **Gothic** by Ulfilas (311-381): translated from Greek; 1st Germanic Bible
6. **Slavonic** (9th cent) by Cyril

II. THE LATIN BIBLE

A. Old Latin Versions (before AD 400)

1. Produced in the West, especially in N. Africa
2. Inconsistent, sometimes unprofessional translations
3. OT was a translation from the Greek LXX
4. **Damasus**: Bishop (Pope) of Rome (AD 366-384)
 - a. Desired standard Latin version
 - b. Commissioned Jerome to produce new, standardized Latin version

- B. The **Latin Vulgate** ("common" or "popular" version)
1. The work of **Jerome**
 - a. b. 347 in Dalmatia; full name: Eusebius Sofronius Hieronymus
 - b. Good grammarian; learned Hebrew for the task
 - c. Began Work in 382 at Rome
 2. NT: Gospels completed in 384; other parts followed
 3. OT:
 - a. Roman Psalter completed in Rome 384
 - b. Jerome moved to Bethlehem in 386, when not elected Pope
 - c. Gallican Psalter completed from LXX
 - d. Jerome realized OT books needed translation from Hebrew
 - e. Completed in AD 405
 4. Apocrypha was included despite Jerome's reservations
 5. History of the text
 - a. Became corrupted with Old Latin readings
 - b. Revised by Cassiodorus, 6th cent. Italy
 - c. Best MS: 716 Codex Amiatinus produced in England
 - d. University of Paris Revision, 13th cent.
 - 1) First edition of Bible with chapter divisions
 - 2) Basis for earliest printed editions
 - e. **Gutenberg Bible, 1456**: first substantial printed book
 - f. After Council of Trent (below)
 - 1) Sixtine Edition (1590): by Pope Sixtus V
 - 2) Clementine Ed.: by Pope Clement VIII (1592-1605)
 6. Influence
 - a. Vulgate met early opposition, ultimately accepted
 - b. Dominated western Christianity for 1000 years
 - c. Council of Trent, 1546: Vulgate = authoritative

III. TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

- A. Reasons new translations are needed (in the same language)
1. New manuscripts are found; better original language text
 2. Advances in textual criticism methods
 3. Language changes with time; old translations obsolete
 - a. "I shall not 'want'"
 - b. Rev 1:13; KJV, "paps"
 - c. Isa 36:12
 - d. Jn 14:2, "mansions"
 - e. "saints"
- B. Problems in translation
1. Unwritten receptor languages; scripts must be devised
 2. "Literal" vs. "meaning": "word for word" or "meaning for meaning"
 - a. Languages do not have word for word equivalences
 - b. Syntax, word order differences
 - 1) Mt 26:27; KJV: "drink ye all of it" vs. "drink it, all of you"
 - 2) Eph 1:3-14 = one verse in Greek
 - c. Idomatic expressions
 - 1) Jn 2:4, "woman"
 - 2) Amos 4:6, "cleanness of teeth" = famine
 - d. Principle of equivalent effect
- C. Other factors:
1. New translation or revision?
 2. Target audience