

# **A Bible Translation Classification System**

## **Contemporary**

These are versions that read the same as other products people would be reading (magazines, newspapers, blogs) and are currently gaining traction.

*New Living Translation (NLT)* -- Though Tyndale Publishing House lacks Zondervan's expertise when it comes to marketing, and tends to get mired in an obsession for One Year Bible editions which scramble the text order, the translation itself continues to catch on with readers.

*Common English Bible (CEB)* -- A recent attempt to offer something in modern language that specifically targets the mainline Protestant market.

*New Century Version (NCV)* -- Its simplified reading level allows you to read faster, and pick up macro-themes. A sister version of the International Children's Bible; it reads and was written for adults.

## **Denominational Niche Versions**

Some may object that the first one in this list sees broader usage, but for the most part, these editions are associated with the denomination named.

*English Standard Version (ESV)* -- Lutheran, Reformed, Calvinist

*New American Bible (NAB)* -- Roman Catholic (don't confuse with NASB)

*Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)* -- Baptist (in the middle of a name change that will see the "H" dropped in future)

*New King James Version (NKJV)* -- Charismatic, Pentecostal, Conservative Evangelical  
Popular

Some versions are now simply famous for being famous. The translations have become so familiar to users and are used so widely in various types of churches that this widespread use eclipses any unique features.

*New International Version (NIV)* -- You could argue that without Zondervan's aggressive push to see "a Bible for every age and every stage," there wouldn't have been the push-back of the King James Only movement. HarperCollins Christian Publishing continues to offer creative ways to get people engaged in the scriptures. For the record, Zondervan -- or parent HarperCollins, or Rupert Murdoch - doesn't own the NIV, but licenses use of it from Biblica aka the International Bible Society.

*King James Version (KJV)* -- It's been 406 years

## **Unique Alternatives**

Some versions offer a creative approach that simply sets them apart, including the first two here, which could equally land in the Contemporary cluster above.

*The Voice* -- Puts the Bible in a dramatic script format, expands some phrases for flow and clarity and adds some additional descriptive paragraphs to clarify the story. If a person isn't Biblically literate, this is a great product.

*The Message* -- A translation (please don't say 'paraphrase,' it's neither accurate nor applicable) that uses conversational English and (in the original editions) strips out verse numbers.

*The Amplified Bible* -- A Bible that saves you running to a Hebrew or Greek dictionary by offering additional shades of meaning for key words.

*The Expanded Bible* -- A more recent version that uses a similar approach to the Amplified.

*New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)* -- A Roman Catholic Bible which has an English edition that was translated directly from its French counterpart. Many non-Catholic readers enjoy this version.

*New International Reader's Version (NIRV)* -- An NIV broken up into smaller sentences with a limited vocabulary. Marketed mostly to children, an adult edition is available for people for whom English is a second language. Quite different from the NCV which is also marketed for kids.

*The Living Bible* -- The forerunner of the NLT, this was officially superseded by it; a small but loyal following keeps it in print. This one is a paraphrase, in this case of the RSV which preceded the NRSV.

*J. B. Phillips* -- As radical as The Message when first released, unfortunately, this was only a New Testament. Still frequently quoted.

*Jewish New Testament* -- Although a complete edition of both the Jewish Old Testament and New Testaments is available, I mention the NT here because seeing the Hebrew names and terminology makes for interesting (and most contextual) reading.

## **Academic**

*New American Standard Bible (NASB)* -- Although once forecast to be for the North American English market what the NIV became, the NASB, because of its more rigorous following of the formal correspondence translation method, is a more difficult read. It's a reliable workhorse of a translation, often found in Bible Colleges and Seminaries, but not so frequently quoted in books or sermons anymore. If you write your own Bible translation, this is the one they'll compare with you with, verse-for-verse.

*New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* -- Despite the above, the Mainline Protestant market continues to perceive the NIV as an Evangelical product, and therefore gravitates to New Revised. The translation philosophies are actually very similar. Also available in a Catholic edition that is widely used. Oxford Publishing provides the quintessential academic version, New Oxford Annotated.

## **Lost in Translation**

A few editions that filled a void in the market at one time, are still available, but not so often talked about.

*Good News Translation (GNT)* also known as Today's English Version (TEV) -- A production of the American Bible Society that served mainline Protestants, Evangelicals and Friday night youth groups well.

*Contemporary English Version (CEV)* -- The Bible Society's attempt to replicate its success with the Good News Bible a generation later. It was not hugely popular at the time, but it is surprising how often it will turn up quoted by pastors and authors, even if most of us don't own a copy.

*God's Word (GW)* -- A project begun as an attempt to complete the Beck translation, which served as a style guide. Many of the earliest contributors were Lutheran, but the Bible is seen as interdenominational Evangelical.

It's important to remember that phrases like "*Key Study Bible*" and "*Life Application Bible*" refer to specific editions, some of which are offered across several translation platforms.

*You can preview all the translations named here at [BibleGateway.com](http://BibleGateway.com)*