

Timeline of Bible Translations

Major Known Translations from the First Through Fourteenth Centuries

Note: This handout lists major known Bible translations and representative witnesses. It does not attempt to list every minor fragment, lectionary, gloss, paraphrase, or local manuscript. Dates are approximate.

Important Background Before the First Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
c. 250-100 B.C.	Septuagint / LXX	Greek	Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, begun with the Pentateuch and expanded to the rest of the Old Testament.
Before/after Christ	Aramaic Targums	Aramaic	Aramaic renderings/paraphrases of the Hebrew Scriptures used in synagogue settings; many traditions were oral before written.

First Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
1st c.	New Testament writings	Greek	Not a translation, but the original New Testament was written in Greek.
1st c.	Use of Septuagint in the church	Greek	The early church often quoted and preached from the Greek Old Testament.

Second Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
Early-mid 2nd c.	Aquila	Greek OT	Very literal Jewish Greek translation/revision of the Hebrew Scriptures.
2nd c.	Theodotion	Greek OT	Greek version/revision especially important for Daniel; the church often used Theodotion Daniel.
2nd c.	Symmachus	Greek OT	Smoother Greek rendering of the Hebrew Scriptures.
2nd c.	Old Syriac beginnings	Syriac	Early Syriac Gospel translation likely began; surviving manuscripts are later.
Late 2nd c.	Old Latin beginnings	Latin	Latin biblical translations probably began by this period, especially in North Africa and the western church.

Third Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
c. 200-300	Old Latin versions	Latin	A family of Latin translations before Jerome; not one official Bible.
c. 200-300	Old Syriac Gospels	Syriac	Early Syriac Gospel tradition, later represented by Curetonian and Sinaitic Syriac manuscripts.
c. 200-300	Coptic versions begin	Coptic	Egyptian Christians began translating Scripture into Coptic dialects, especially Sahidic.
c. 240-250	Origen's Hexapla	Hebrew/Greek	A massive scholarly comparison of Hebrew and several Greek versions; not a vernacular Bible but crucial to transmission history.

Fourth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
300s	Coptic Sahidic Bible	Coptic	One of the earliest and most important Coptic Bible traditions.
300s	Coptic Bohairic and other dialects	Coptic	Other Coptic dialectal translations developed over time.
c. 340-380	Gothic Bible of Ulfilas/Wulfila	Gothic	One of the earliest Bible translations into a Germanic language.
300s	Old Latin manuscripts	Latin	Old Latin Gospel manuscripts such as Codex Vercellensis are commonly dated to the fourth century.

382	Jerome begins revising Latin Gospels	Latin	The beginning of the work that led to the Vulgate tradition.
390s	Jerome translates OT from Hebrew	Latin	Jerome translated much of the Old Testament from Hebrew rather than simply revising Old Latin from Greek.

Fifth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
c. 400-405	Jerome's Vulgate develops	Latin	Jerome's Latin work continues and circulates.
Early 400s	Armenian Bible	Armenian	Connected with Mesrop Mashtots, Sahak/Isaac, and the creation of the Armenian alphabet.
400s	Georgian Bible begins	Georgian	Georgian translation tradition likely begins in this century.
400s	Peshitta becomes standard	Syriac	The Peshitta becomes the standard Bible of Syriac-speaking churches.
400s	Ethiopic / Ge'ez tradition begins	Ge'ez	Scripture translated for the Ethiopian church, likely fifth-sixth century.
400s	Old Latin still in use	Latin	The Vulgate did not immediately replace Old Latin.

Sixth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
500s	Ethiopic / Ge'ez Bible expands	Ge'ez	Ethiopic biblical tradition continues to develop.
500s	Christian Palestinian Aramaic versions	Aramaic	Aramaic dialect used by Melkite Christians in Palestine and surrounding areas.
500s	Syriac revisions	Syriac	Syriac textual traditions continue, including revisions and specialized versions.
508	Philoxenian Syriac New Testament	Syriac	A Syriac revision associated with Philoxenus of Mabbug.
500s	Latin Vulgate grows in use	Latin	The Vulgate increasingly becomes the standard Bible in the West, though Old Latin persists.

Seventh Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
616	Harklean Syriac New Testament	Syriac	A highly literal Syriac revision made by Thomas of Harkel.
600s	Christian Palestinian Aramaic manuscripts	Aramaic	Biblical and lectionary material continues in Palestinian Aramaic.
600s	Early Anglo-Saxon biblical paraphrase	Old English	Biblical material begins to be expressed in Old English poetry and paraphrase.
c. 657-680	Caedmon's biblical poetry	Old English	Not a Bible translation proper, but an early English rendering of biblical stories in poetic form.
600s	Arabic Christian beginnings	Arabic	Some Christian Arabic biblical translation may have begun; major surviving Arabic manuscript tradition is later.

Eighth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
c. 700	Lindisfarne Gospels produced	Latin	The manuscript itself is Latin; the Old English gloss was added later.
700s	Bede's Old English work	Old English	Bede reportedly worked on translating John into Old English near his death in 735.
700s	Vulgate standardization efforts	Latin	Latin biblical manuscripts continue to be copied and corrected.
c. 700	Codex Amiatinus	Latin Vulgate	One of the earliest complete Vulgate manuscripts of the whole Bible.

Ninth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
800s	Old Church Slavonic Bible work	Old Church Slavonic	Associated with Cyril and Methodius and their disciples.

c. 862-885	Cyril and Methodius translations	Old Church Slavonic	Scripture and liturgical texts translated for Slavic peoples.
867	Early Arabic manuscript evidence	Arabic	Sinai Arabic 151 is an important dated Arabic biblical manuscript.
800s	Armenian Gospel manuscripts	Armenian	Some of the oldest surviving Armenian Gospel manuscripts date from this century.
897	Adishi/Adysh Gospels	Georgian	One of the oldest dated Georgian Gospel manuscripts.
800s	Old High German biblical material	Old High German	Includes Gospel harmonies, biblical poetry, partial renderings and paraphrases.

Tenth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
c. 950-970	Lindisfarne Old English gloss	Old English	Aldred added an interlinear Old English gloss between Latin lines.
900s	Rushworth Gospels gloss	Old English	Another Old English gloss tradition related to the Latin Gospels.
900s	West Saxon Gospels	Old English	The four Gospels translated into Old English, likely late tenth century.
900s	Arabic Bible manuscripts increase	Arabic	Christian Arabic biblical manuscripts become more visible.
900s	Slavonic Bible tradition expands	Old Church Slavonic	Continued copying and development among Slavic Christians.

Eleventh Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
1000s	Aelfric's biblical translations/paraphrases	Old English	Aelfric translated and paraphrased parts of the Old Testament, especially for teaching.
1000s	Old English Hexateuch	Old English	Old English translation of the first six books of the Old Testament.
1000s	Slavonic biblical manuscripts	Old Church Slavonic	Continued Slavic biblical transmission.
1000s	Romance vernacular biblical material	Early French/Occitan/Italian	Mostly partial biblical material, paraphrases, and liturgical texts.

Twelfth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
1100s	Old French biblical translations/paraphrases	Old French	Portions of Scripture and Bible-story literature circulate in French.
1100s	Anglo-Norman biblical material	Anglo-Norman French	Biblical material appears for French-speaking England after the Norman Conquest.
1100s	Middle English Psalters/Gospel material	Middle English	English biblical translation continues, especially Psalms and Gospel portions.
1100s	Waldensian / Occitan traditions begin	Occitan/Provencal	Vernacular Scripture associated with reform movements in southern Europe.
1100s	German partial translations	Middle High German	Partial biblical translations and paraphrases appear before complete printed German Bibles.

Thirteenth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
1200s	Bible historiale tradition begins	French	French biblical history based on Latin sources, especially Peter Comestor's Historia Scholastica.
1200s	Old French Bible translations	French	More extensive French biblical translations and adaptations circulate.
1200s	Castilian / Spanish biblical translations	Spanish/Castilian	Biblical translation activity grows in Spain.
c. 1280	Alfonsine Bible / General Estoria material	Castilian	Connected with Alfonso X's scholarly court; includes biblical material in Castilian.
1200s	Middle English Psalters	Middle English	Psalms are among the most commonly translated biblical books.
1200s	Italian partial biblical translations	Italian vernaculars	Portions of Scripture appear in Italian vernaculars.

1200s	Czech biblical beginnings	Czech	Partial translations and biblical material begin appearing.
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Fourteenth Century

Date	Translation / Version	Language	Notes
1300s	French Bible historiale widely copied	French	One of the most influential medieval French Bible traditions.
1300s	Czech Bible translation develops	Czech	Czech biblical translation grows before Hus.
1300s	German manuscript Bibles	German	Several German Bible translations existed before Luther.
c. 1340s	Richard Rolle's English Psalter	Middle English	A Middle English prose translation/commentary on the Psalms.
c. 1380-1382	Wycliffe Bible, Early Version	Middle English	First complete English Bible, translated from the Latin Vulgate.
c. 1388-1395	Wycliffe Bible, Later Version	Middle English	A more idiomatic revision associated with Wycliffe's followers.
1300s	Italian vernacular Bible tradition	Italian	More extensive Italian vernacular biblical translation appears.
1300s	Dutch / Middle Dutch translations	Dutch	Partial and larger biblical works circulate.
1300s	Catalan and other Romance translations	Catalan/Romance	Vernacular biblical translation develops in parts of western Europe.

Condensed Master Timeline

Century	Main translation developments
Before Christ	Septuagint; Aramaic Targum tradition begins
1st	New Testament written in Greek; Septuagint used by early Christians
2nd	Aquila, Theodotion, Symmachus; Old Latin and Old Syriac beginnings
3rd	Old Latin, Old Syriac, Coptic; Origen's Hexapla
4th	Gothic Bible; Old Latin manuscripts; Jerome begins Vulgate
5th	Armenian, Georgian, Peshitta standardization, Ethiopic beginnings
6th	Ethiopic, Palestinian Aramaic, Philoxenian Syriac
7th	Harklean Syriac; Caedmon; early English biblical poetry; Arabic beginnings
8th	Bede; Codex Amiatinus; Latin Vulgate standardization
9th	Old Church Slavonic; early Arabic manuscripts; Armenian/Georgian witnesses
10th	Lindisfarne gloss; Rushworth gloss; West Saxon Gospels
11th	Aelfric; Old English Hexateuch
12th	French, Anglo-Norman, German, Occitan, Middle English partial translations
13th	French Bible historiale; Castilian, Italian, Czech, German, English partial versions
14th	Rolle's Psalter; Wycliffe Bible; German, Czech, French, Italian manuscript Bibles

Bible translation did not begin with Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, or King James. Long before the Reformation, Scripture had moved from Hebrew and Greek into Aramaic, Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Arabic, Slavonic, Old English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Czech, Dutch, and other languages. The Reformation did not invent Bible translation; it accelerated it through printing, renewed study of Hebrew and Greek, and a conviction that ordinary people should hear God's word in their own tongue.