So Many Bibles to Choose

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On September 15, 1966 the American Bible Society published the first, *Good News for Modern Man*, a Modern Contemporary English Translation of the New Testament. It was Eugene Nida, a linguist who came up with the idea in Biblical translations of “Dynamic Equivalence”. Instead of trying to make a word-for-word translation, Nida’s idea was that translators should try to get to the thought behind the words, a “thought-for-thought” translation. While this meant the text was easier to read, it also meant that the translator decided what the author was trying to say and put it into contemporary English. As far as Catholics were concerned, many felt that texts had a decidedly Protestant leaning. This was followed by the addition of the Old Testament. Since the ABS wanted to have a universal translation, they came up with Catholic editions that included the Deutero-Canonical books, which were given a Catholic imprimatur stating that the work is suitable for Catholics to use. This was followed by by *Today’s English* Version which is less of a paraphrase (putting into English what the translator thought the author meant) and more of a (literal translation, exactly what author wrote using the closest English word.)

This illustrates the two philosophies in producing Bibles. The first is the formal or complete equivalence by giving the exact text, preserving as much of the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic text as possible. It may not sound understandable and may be confusing in English. The Catholic example of this is the Jerusalem Bible. (For EWTN watchers, this is the version that Mother Angelica uses.) The New Jerusalem Bible uses inclusive language that was rejected by the Vatican. A use of more contemporary American English can be found in the *New Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition*. The Vatican for its use of inclusive language also rejected this. *The Revised Standard Version – Catholic Edition* produced in the 1940s and 50s is another good source for a formal American English Equivalence translation.

As this article began with the Good News, which is the best example of the Dynamic Equivalence.

What is a Catholic to do?

Older Catholics are familiar with the term *Douai-Rheims*. This was the original Catholic Bible, which was a translation of the Latin Vulgate, attributed to St. Jerome. The New Testament was published in 1582. The famous Protestant English translation called the *King James Version* was printed in 1611.

Those Catholics around before Vatican II are familiar with the *Confraternity Edition*, which was begun in 1936 by the American Bishop’s Confraternity for Christian Doctrine. It was originally going to be a translation of the Clementine Vulgate but when Pope Pius XII issued *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943 it caused a shift to original languages. It was not completed in time for Vatican II.

The Confraternity came out with the *New American Bible* in 1970. This was a formal equivalence Bible using American idiomatic (common usage) expressions. It was the basis for the Roman Catholic lectionary from 1970 to 2002. For those Ukrainian Catholic parishes that used the Gospel Book produced by Bishop Basil Losten of Stamford, they were using the NAB. The impact went far beyond the Divine Liturgy. For the Stamford Euchologion and Horologion also used the NAB. Since it was the desire of the Eastern Catholic Diocesan Directors of Religious Education not to confuse learners with hearing one translation in Church and other in class, it was decided to use the NAB in the *God With Us* Series.

Since that time, Orthodox Churches have started to use the New King James Version, found in the *Orthodox Study Bible,* which is a translation of the Greek Septuagint. In 2000, Roman Catholic lectionary use has switched to a modified *New American Bible with Revised Psalms and Revised New Testament*.

Since the Losten *Gospel Book* is still widely used and since *God With Us* has not been revised, it is probably best for an Ukrainian Catholic for private study and for meditation to use the *New American Bible*.