

Introduction to Scripture & The English Bible
The Translation of the Bible
Lesson 21

"The Bible translator is servant of the Scripture text not its master." ~ David Norris ~

"Translating [the Bible] is certainly not everybody's business, as the mad saints imagine; it requires a genuinely pious, faithful, diligent, God-fearing, experienced, practiced heart. Therefore, I hold that a false Christian or a sectarian spirit is unable to give a faithful translation."

~ Martin Luther ~

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING TRANSLATION

"Translation" means the "_____."
_____." It is a work which requires great skill and intimate knowledge of at least two languages, and when it comes to translating the Word of God, it also requires _____
_____.by God, Himself.

A. Transliteration.

This is really the translation of _____ There are some English words which have been basically transliterated from the Greek (e.g. 'Baptize' - 'baptidzo' ; 'angel' - 'angelos' ; etc.).

B. Literal Translation.

This is the translation of _____ in their original order. A strict translation of John 3:16 in this way would result in:

"So for loved the God the world that the Son His the only begotten He gave,
that everyone who believes on Him not may perish but may have life eternal."

A literal translation may be considered accurate, but it is difficult to read and often does not make sense!

Those who would criticize the translation of the Authorized Version, seeking a more literal rendering, would do well to ponder this point.

C. Dynamic Translation.

This is the translation of _____ without great concern for words. The 'dynamic equivalency' method of translating the Bible attempts to couch the meaning of scripture in the contemporary speech. Thus, John 3:16 in Today's English Bible - TEV, (*Good News for Modern Man*) reads:

"For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that every one who believes in him may not die but have eternal life."

Dynamic translation requires interpretation first and then translation.

D. Formal Translation.

The term 'formal' here does not mean 'formalistic' or 'rigid'. It refers to the classical method of translation, whereby the _____, the _____, and the _____ of the Hebrew or Greek text are not only accurately translated, but are set in a proper form of the English language. This is the proper form of Bible translation.

Thus, we have the precious words of John 3:16 in the Authorized, King James Version:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

E. Paraphrase or Free Translation.

This is similar to "dynamic translation" in that it concerns itself with ideas rather than words. To paraphrase is "to put in other words." It is more _____ than translation.

II. CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION: ANALYTIC VS. SYNTHETIC LANGUAGES

In the study of grammar we must understand that languages are put together in different ways. An _____ is a language that _____. That means that the very order in which the words occur is the way in which we grammatically grasp the meaning of the sentence. English is very much a word order language. The importance here for the student of Scripture is that Hebrew is an *analytic* language (but not quite so dependent on word order as English).

An _____ or _____ is a language where _____ and much more _____ (e.g. "The Cat ate the Rat, The Rat ate the Cat"). Greek and Spanish are synthetic languages.

II. OTHER TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

A. There are some Greek and Hebrew words for which the English has no exact equivalent, and vice-versa.

- B. Some Greek and Hebrew words may be translated using different English words depending on the other words in the sentence.
- C. Greek syntax sometimes uses " _____," and the literal translation of such would reverse the intended meaning in the English. (e.g. Mark 12:14 says, "... and carest for no man ..." but if literally translated would say in effect, "don't care for no one ...")
- D. Some Greek verbs have a _____ other than those used in English grammar, notably the "aorist" tense. (The aorist tense is a past tense denoting an action without indicating whether completed, continued, or repeated.) There are also differences in mood with verbs.
- E. Greek nouns use different _____ than in English. The word "Spirit" (pneuma) is neuter in the Greek, but masculine in the English.
- F. Poetic forms, especially in the Hebrew language, are much different than in English. Hebrew poetry uses parallelisms, where English poetry is metrical.

Because the English language has developed under many influences, it is both precise and lucid - thus eminently superior as a vehicle of translation.

IV, TRANSLATION DISPUTES

- A. Which text of Scripture to use?
- B. Which method of translation to use?
- C. Choice of words?
 - 1. Often there is:
 - a. More than one possibility.
 - b. Local idioms.
 - 2. Those who have had the privilege of studying a foreign language even for a short time know that there is not just "one" correct translation of a word, phrase, or sentence of a foreign language into English. Often there are two or more "right" ways of translating a sentence in Spanish, German, French, or Italian into the English tongue. The same is true of Greek and Hebrew as well. Often the difference between the two "right" translations will focus upon how *literal* a person wishes to be in his or her translation.

Often, the translator must pick the "best" translation of two or more possible translations. Hebrew and Greek idioms must be kept and explained! The chicken of God cannot be substituted for the lamb of God.

V. DANGERS OF DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCY

A. The Great Problem Confronting World Evangelization.

Whenever a missionary enters a non-English speaking country, he is immediately confronted with two vital questions:

1. Is there a Bible available in the language of the people?
2. If so, what kind of Bible is it?

All too often the answer to these questions are, "There is no Bible!" or, "There is a Bible available, but it is hopelessly corrupt!"

Most foreign language Bibles available today have been produced through liberal Bible Societies, and are translated from the corrupt UBS critical text using the dynamic equivalency method. Even in European countries which have a Reformation-Textus Receptus-New Testament, the new translations are predominant.

This poses a great dilemma, because the missionary usually has a big enough struggle learning the language for himself. How can he translate the pure Word of God into an unfamiliar language? Does he use a corrupt 'Bible' and correct it? Does he teach the people English first, then use the Authorized Version? Does he simply ignore the issue?

There are no easy answers to this very serious problem. It has _____ been God's design that the Lord's churches be the pillar and ground of truth, I Timothy 3:15 and as such it is THEIR responsibility to do something about it - whatever the cost!

B. What is Dynamic Equivalency?

The method of DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCY is concerned with meaning and impressions. It could be called an "impact translation" because its chief concern is to affect the reader. In theory, it is to affect the reader the way the Scriptures originally affected the first recipients. More often it is designed to affect them the way the translators want them affected.

C. The False Assumptions of Dynamic Equivalency!

Some of the major tenets of this methods state that:

1. The Original Scriptures _____ . That this is not so is shown by verses such as II Peter 3:16; Matthew 13:10-13; I Peter 1:10-11; Hebrews 5:14.

The fact is, the Word of God was meant to be studied, II Timothy 2:15.

2. The Scriptures _____ . The thought behind versions such as the TEV is that the Bible must be made to read and be understood like any daily newspaper. That this is not so is shown by verses such as Acts 8:27-35.

The fact is, the Word of God was meant to be preached - I Corinthians 1:21.

3. The Scriptures _____ . In his book, *Christianity In Culture*, Professor Charles Kraft discusses this 'problem' using John 1:29 as an example. He said that if one goes into a culture where the lamb is vulgar and the pig is sacred, one would have to say, "Behold, the pig of God."

David Cloud (for 10 years a church planter in Nepal) reported one translator working in Northeast India reasoning thus: "This tribe has never sacrificed lambs, but they have sacrificed roosters to their gods in days past. Therefore we must translate ... 'Behold the Cock of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"

D. The Apostle of Dynamic Equivalency.

Dr. Eugene Nida of the United Bible Societies has actively promoted this method of translation in different languages

Nida is a heretic - he denies the inspiration, infallibility and authority of the Word of God.

E. The Error of Dynamic Equivalency.

In his book, *Dynamic Equivalency: Death Knell of Pure Scripture*, David Cloud lists several errors with this translating method, such as:

1. It Denies _____ . It denies that:

- a. The Bible is heavenly revelation - not actual revelation.
- b. The Bible is verbally inspired - words, not concepts or thoughts!

2. It Ignores _____ .

3. It Confuses _____
_____.
4. It Substitutes _____.
5. It Confuses _____
_____.

VI. THE TRANSLATORS

- A. It is vitally important that the Scripture be translated by _____
_____ with a _____.
Only such translators will treat the Scripture with proper respect and be led by the Spirit.
- B. Rex Cobb teaches Bible translators. He writes:

"Who should translate God's word? That was one of the first questions we dealt with in the recent class on Bible Translation Principles. Some feel that the number one requirement is a vast knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. This is helpful, no doubt, at times in understanding a Scripture text, but unfortunately those educated elites are most likely teaching in classrooms, and not about to live in the mountains, deserts, or jungles where Bible translation needs to be done. Here are a few other requirements that are needed in a translator: 1) someone who has strong convictions about the inspiration and preservation of the Bible; 2) one who can stick to the task, or as William Carey put it, "plod"; 3) someone who is honest and will not twist the translation to match his doctrinal position; 4) one who is willing to work hard at learning the language and culture of the receptor language and also the meaning of the biblical texts; and 5) one who is willing to subject his work to the scrutiny of others."

VII. A CHALLENGE FROM MARTIN LUTHER

"On the other hand I have not just gone ahead anyway and disregarded altogether the exact wording of the original. Rather with my helpers I have been very careful to see what where everything turns on a single passage, I have kept to the original quite literally and have not lightly departed from it ... But I preferred to do violence to the German language rather than to depart from the word" (*On Translating: An Open Letter; Works* Vol. 35; p. 194).