Principles and Practices
Of Bible Translation:
Presentation

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The purpose of this paper is to suggest and illustrate some principles or "rules" to guide translators as they carry the Word of God from the original languages into modern versions in different languages. These principles can also guide us in evaluating existing Bible translations.

Understanding the principles and the difficulties of Bible translation is important to the church at any time, but we would probably not be discussing this topic today if our church body was not wrestling with the decision of whether to continue to use the NIV in its new form, to turn to some other translation, or to undertake a translation or revision of our own. Our purpose in this paper is not to evaluate one specific translation, but to discuss criteria by which we can judge translations. We, of course, cannot do this without referring to specific examples of translation which illustrate the principles positively or negatively. The two main versions that we will use for purposes of illustration are three generations of the NIV (the translation we have been using) and the ESV (a revision of the RSV, recently adopted by the Missouri Synod), since these are representatives of two philosophies of translation. These will be compared with a number of other translations in a variety of styles.

The Bible does not prescribe any specific theory or rules for Bible translation. There are, however, some biblical principles and precedents which will shape our theories about translation, such as:

1) Every word of Scripture is inspired by God.
2) The essence (*forma*) of the Word is the divinely inspired meaning, not the outward form or sound of the letters or words (*materia*).
3) The words and idioms of the original languages have a unique relation to the divinely intended meaning (*forma externa,* external essence).
4) God wants people of every nation and tribe to be able to hear the wonderful works of God in their own language.
5) God spoke through human authors who used three languages and a wide variety of literary styles and levels of speech.
6) Translation of the Bible had begun before the New Testament era, and the New Testament incorporates translations from the Old Testament in a variety of translation styles, from quite literal to interpretive. [1]

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[1] For a comprehensive survey of examples see Archer and Chiricigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey,* Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1983. On the method of the Septuagint see Jobes and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint,* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000, esp. p 86-102, 105-118.

We will begin with some general theses about Bible translation, which will then be illustrated with more specific corollaries and examples.

Thesis 1: The duty of a translator is to convey all the meaning (or ambiguity), all the beauty (or the ugliness), all the style (high or low), and all the emotional impact of the original into the translation.

Thesis 2: Thesis 1 is impossible.

Thesis 3: Thesis 2 is not entirely correct.

Thesis 4: In small bits and pieces a translator can come close achieving the aims of thesis 1. *Tetelestai* > It is finished. The only major thing wrong with this translation is that it has too many words. Were it not for the weight of tradition, we could probably improve the translation by reducing it to a single word, "Finished!"

If these theses are true, what percentage of success at meeting these goals do we expect a translation to achieve in order to gain a grade of excellent, good, or adequate? Do we expect translators to achieve a percentage of success equal to the performance we expect from airplanes at getting us to our destination without crashing? Are we satisfied with the standard of success achieved by an NFL team that makes it to the Super Bowl with a mediocre 10-6 record during the regular season? Is the standard that of a baseball batter who is "adequate" if he succeeds 25% of the time and "excellent" if he succeeds 33% of the time? How many strikeouts are enough to send a translation to the bench? Or, looking at it from another direction, how many homeruns keep the strike-out king off the bench? Or if you prefer biblical imagery, "How many dead flies give perfume a bad smell?" (Ec 10:1) This is one question that we have to answer in choosing a translation.

It is not, however, simply a matter of counting the number or percentage of weaknesses. In a car brake failure is more critical than air conditioner failure. In a Bible translation, errors that touch the person and work of Christ are critical. Relatively few can sink a translation.

What are some criteria or "rules" that should guide us in producing and evaluating Bible translations? In the rest of this paper I will suggest some "rules" and offer illustrations. I am operating with the assumption that we are speaking here of a translation for general use in the church, rather than a niche translation such as a children's Bible or a Bible for people with limited reading ability. God inspired only one Bible for the use of the church—there were not different Bibles for different uses or for different groups in the church. One Bible served the need for public reading (Je 36:6,15,23; Ne 8:1-3; Josh 8:34) and private study (Da 9:2, Ac 8:27; Co 4:16).[2] We can certainly make all kinds of derivative works to meet special needs, but our concern here is a general, all-purpose Bible.

Some Principles and Guidelines

1. Although any skilled linguist who is fluent in the source language and the receiving language can do an acceptable job of rendering the literal sense of the words of Scripture, the most important

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[2] Horizontal translation within a generation was most often by oral reading since there were few copies of the text. Vertical translation from generation to generation of leaders was by the written text. The transmission of the pronunciation had to be transmitted to the student from the teacher since the text was unpointed, and the pronunciation was always changing. Successions of scribes were in effect "translating" the text for their successors.

qualities of a Bible translator are a thorough knowledge of the whole message of Scripture, connected with the aptitude to let Scripture interpret Scripture, and a humble willingness to submit to everything which Scripture says. It was this aptitude, more than the depth of his knowledge of the original languages that made Luther such a great translator.

2. When a choice must be made, accuracy in conveying the divinely intended meaning of the text takes priority over literary beauty or rendering the text into common, contemporary English.

3. The translation must be free of doctrinal errors whether inadvertent or deliberate. It must not falsify the Word of God. This is reflected in two principles adopted by WELS TEC:
We expect that a translation will understand itself as a "direct quotation" of an ancient document, rather than merely supplying the "gist" of the original's meaning in a contemporizing paraphrase. We expect, with Luther, that when theologically necessary a translation will adhere closely to the exact wording of the original.

4. The translator should not be too locked in to one theory of translation whether "dynamic equivalence" or "literal translation" because:
   a. Literal (that is, literalistic) translations sometimes give the wrong meaning or they do not communicate clearly in the receiving language.
   b. Dynamic equivalence, though a worthy goal, is not fully possible. We would be happy with any translation that was dynamic and equivalent, but too often translations labeled "dynamic equivalent" are either not equivalent or not dynamic. Our goal is that every translation be "meaning equivalent" and "emotional equivalent".
   c. The translator will have to weigh whether a more dynamic or more literal approach best conveys the divinely intended meaning on a case-by-case basis.

5. It is useful for a translation to have a set of rules and rubrics[3] to guide the translators, but the relationship between two languages is so complex, that it is hard to image a rule or rubric which can be applied without exception.

6. The translator should adhere to the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. This is especially true in regard to doctrinal statements. One passage of Scripture cannot be set against another. New Testament interpretations of Old Testament passages should be accepted.

7. The translator should not specify one level of language and usage to be used uniformly throughout the Bible because the level of language in the Bible itself varies greatly from book to book and from passage to passage. In many Bible passages the original language was neither "common" nor "contemporary."

8. The translator should not drain the color and variety of expressions from passages and level the language by downgrading the imagery.

9. The goal of a translator is not so much to make Judeans sound like 21st century Americans but to make them sound like Judeans who speak English.

10. Though "one Hebrew word=one English word" is not a viable standard for a translator to apply consistently, the translator should strive to be consistent rather than casual in his renderings of specific words.

11. The translator will try to be euphemistic where the original is euphemistic and blunt or coarse where the text is blunt.

12. Capitalization of nouns and pronouns that refer to God is not a feature of the original text, and therefore it falls into the category of interpretation rather than translation. The practice is best avoided. English style, however, requires titles and proper names be capitalized regardless of whether or not they are a reference to deity.

13. Good translation should preserve the authors' co-ordination and subordination of thought units.

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[3] Here "rule" means a general guideline such as those we are listing here. A "rubric" is a more specific guideline such as "we will translate the Tertragrammaton LORD."

14. Translators should be wary of importing their own stylistic preferences into the text against the preference of the author, unless such changes are necessary for clear communication.
15. Where possible, when the text, on the basis of Scripture, is open to two equally valid understandings, the translator should attempt to preserve both options. When this is not possible, one of the options can be preserved in a footnote.
16. In using "gender-accurate language" the translator will strive to be inclusive where the original is inclusive and exclusive where the original is exclusive.
17. The translator will recognize and preserve direct prophecy where the immediate context or other testimony of Scripture indicates direct prophecy. (Ditto for typical prophecy.)
18. Though this is not strictly speaking a translation issue, a key decision by a translator is which text he is going to translate. A translation project will need to choose a base text and a set of principles to guide translators in evaluating variants.

This list is by no means designed to be complete. It is intended to be a representative sample of some of the more important principles. We will now illustrate the principles with examples. Our consideration of the examples will by necessity be cursory. Many of them need a detailed study in their own right.

Illustrations of the Principles and Guidelines

1. While any skilled linguist who is fluent in the source language and the receiving language can do an acceptable job of rendering the literal sense of the words, the most important qualities of a translator are a thorough knowledge of the whole message of Scripture, connected with the aptitude to let Scripture interpret Scripture, and a humble willingness submit to everything which Scripture says. It was this aptitude, more than the depth of his knowledge of the original languages that made Luther such a great translator.

    Any competent linguist, whether Calvinist or Zwinglian, can correctly translate the words "this is my body." Many Zwinglians and Calvinists, however, cannot keep their reason from tampering with the meaning of key passages on the Lord's Supper (e.g.,1 Corinthians 10:16).

    Literal: The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a *koinonia* of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a *koinonia* of the body of Christ.

    KJV The cup of blessing which we bless , is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break , is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

    NKJV The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

    NIV Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

    ESV The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

    Holman The cup of blessing that we give thanks for, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

    Amplified Bible The cup of blessing [of wine at the Lord's Supper] upon which we ask [God's] blessing, does it not mean [that in drinking it] we participate in and share a fellowship (a communion) in the blood of Christ (the Messiah)? The bread which we break,

does it not mean [that in eating it] we participate in and share a fellowship (a communion) in the body of Christ?

The Message When we drink the cup of blessing, aren't we taking into ourselves the blood, the very life, of Christ? And isn't it the same with the loaf of bread we break and eat? Don't we take into ourselves the body, the very life, of Christ?

Living Bible When we ask the Lord's blessing upon our drinking from the cup of wine at the Lord's Table, this means, doesn't it, that all who drink it are sharing together the blessings of Christ's blood? And when we break off pieces of bread from the loaf to eat there together, this shows that we are sharing together in the benefits of his body.

Evaluate the translations "communion," "participation," "sharing", and "fellowship."[4] Which translations falsify the doctrine of the Lord's Supper?

Whatever evaluation we may place on the individual translations in which Luther departs from a strictly literal rendering of the original, the purpose and effect of his non-literal renderings are the opposite of those cited above—Luther's expansions of the text affirm what Scripture says rather than deny it. The most famous example is his adding the word *alone* to Paul's statement in Romans 3: "we are justified by faith *alone."*

On the one hand, Luther was not willing to have his translation judged by the papists who had no understanding of Scripture. (This quotation also illustrates the timeless principle that translators can be sensitive about criticism of their work.)

I will not allow the papists to judge, for their ears continue to be too long and their hee-haws too weak for them to be critical of my translating. I know quite well how much skill, hard work, understanding and intelligence are needed for a good translation. They know it less than even the miller's donkey for they have never tried it.[5]

Those who have not ever been able to speak correctly (to say nothing of translating) have all at once become my masters and I their pupil. If I were to have asked them how to translate the first two words of Matthew *Liber Generationis* into German, not one of them would have been able to say "Quack! Quack!" And they judge all my works! Fine fellows! It was also like this for St. Jerome when he translated the Bible. Everyone was his master. He alone was entirely incompetent as people who were not good enough to clean his boots judged his works. This is why it takes a great deal of patience to do good things in public, for the world believes itself to be the Master of Knowledge, always putting the bit under the horse's tail, and not judging itself, for that is the world's nature. It can do nothing else.[6]

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4 Chrysostom on *koinonia*: Why did [Paul in 1 Co 10:16] not say "participation" (*metalepsis* or *metoche*)? Because he intended to express something more and to point out how close the union (*henosis*) was. We communicate not only by participating and partaking, but also by being united. For as that body is united with Christ, so we are also united with him by this bread" (*A Select Library of Nicene and Post –Nicene Fathers*, Vol. XII, p 139.) D. Kuske, WLQ, Fall 2004, p 284-286.

5 To try to counter Luther's translation the papists plagiarized Luther's translation and made Catholic changes to it and then published it as if it was their own.

6 *Open Letter on Translation,* Luther, Martin, *Luther's Works*, Vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press p 194. A public domain version is at http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/luther-translate.txt

But to sincere inquirers Luther offered this defense of his translation:

> For you and our people, however, I shall show why I used the word *sola* (even though in Romans 3 it wasn't *sola* I used but *solum* or *tantum*). That is how closely those asses have looked at my text! However, I have used *sola fides* in other places, and I want to use both *solum* and *sola*. I have continually tried translating in a pure and accurate German. ⁕⁕⁕ I also know that in Romans 3, the word *solum* is not present in either Greek or Latin text—the papists did not have to teach me that—it is fact! The letters s-o-l-a are not there. And these knotheads stare at them like cows at a new gate, while at the same time they do not recognize that it conveys the sense of the text—if the translation is to be clear and accurate, it belongs there. I wanted to speak German since it was German I had spoken in translation—not Latin or Greek. But it is the nature of our language that in speaking about two things, one which is affirmed, the other denied, we use the word "only" (*solum/allein*) along with the word "not" (*nicht*) or "no" (*kein*). For example, we say "the farmer brings only (*allein*) grain and no money"; or "No, I really have no money, but only (*allein*) grain"; "I have only eaten and not yet drunk"; "Did you write it only and not read it over?" There are a vast number of such everyday cases.[7]

Luther's defense then was two-fold—his goal was good theology in good German, with the first having a higher priority.

2. When a choice must be made, accuracy in conveying the divinely intended meaning of the text takes priority over literary beauty or rendering the text into common, contemporary English.

It requires Christian judgment linked with a thorough knowledge of all of Scripture to make the tough calls of when to be more literal and when to be more free in translating. These decisions will inevitably be influenced by a translator's theological position. Luther offered his opinion on the issue:

> Yet I have not just gone ahead, ignoring the exact wording in the original. Instead, with great care, I have, along with my helpers, gone ahead and have kept literally to the original, without the slightest deviation, wherever it appeared that a passage was crucial. For instance, in John 6 Christ says: "Him has God the Father set his seal upon (*versiegelt*)." It would be more clear in German to say "Him has God the Father signified (*gezeiehent*)" or even "God the Father means him." But rather than doing violence to the original, I have done violence to the German tongue. Ah, translating is not every one's skill as some mad saints think. A right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing Christian, trained, educated, and experienced heart is required. So I hold that no false Christian or divisive spirit can be a good translator.[8]

Compare Luther's handling of John 6:27 with these translations.

ESV   For on him God the Father has set his seal.
NIV   For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.
HCSB God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him.
CEV   God the Father has given him the right to do so.
NCV   Because on him God the Father has put his power.
MSG   He and what he does are guaranteed by God the Father to last.

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[7] *Open Letter on Translation,* p 194.
[8] *Open Letter on Translation*, p 194.

Evaluate each translation.

In "Defense of the Translation of Psalms" Luther gives another example of the need to retain a literal translation at times.

> Ps 68:18: "You have ascended on high; you have led captivity captive." It would have been good German to say, "You have set the captives free." But this is weak and does not retain the fine, rich meaning of the Hebrew which says, "You have led captivity captive." This does not merely imply the Christ freed the captives, but also that he captured and led away captivity itself, so that it never could or would take us captive again.[9]

> NIV   you led captives in your train
> ESV   leading a host of captives in your train
> HCSB taking away captives
> NRSV leading captives in your train
> NASB You have led captive Your captives
> NLT   you led a crowd of captives
> MSG   captives in tow
> NKJV You have led captivity captive
> KJV   thou hast led captivity captive

> Only King James follows Luther, but was it from sensitivity to imagery or loyalty to literalism? Or following Luther? As for the others, what's with the train?

3. The translation must be free of doctrinal errors whether inadvertent or deliberate. It must not falsify the Word of God. This is reflected in two principles presented by WELS TEC:

> We expect that a translation will understand itself as a "direct quotation" of an ancient document, rather than merely supplying the "gist" of the original's meaning in a contemporizing paraphrase. We expect, with Luther, that when theologically necessary a translation will adhere closely to the exact wording of the original.

An obvious issue which our church must deal with in connection with the principles expressed in this section of the paper is how much agreement in doctrine is required for working together on a reliable Bible translation. Can we entrust production and control of our Bible translation to people who do not share our confession?   In general we can probably say that the more literal a translation is, the safer it is from the doctrinal presuppositions of the translators. The more interpretative a translation is, the more subject it is to the doctrinal inclinations of the translators.

An example is Mark 1:4 in which the literal translations are okay regardless of the translator's doctrinal view of baptism. All the interpretive translations (NLT, MSG, BBE) are misleading.

> NIV   John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of
>   repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
> ESV   John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of
>   repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
> HCSB   John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance
>   for the forgiveness of sins. Note: *a baptism based on repentance*

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[9] *Luther's Works,* Volume 35, p 217.

NASB John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of
        repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
NRSV John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of
        repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
NLT   This messenger was John the Baptist. He was in the wilderness and preached
        that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins
        and turned to God to be forgiven.
MSG   John the Baptizer appeared in the wild, preaching a baptism of life-change
        that leads to forgiveness of sins.
BBE   John came, and gave baptism in the waste land, preaching baptism as a sign
        of forgiveness of sin for those whose hearts were changed.

Another good test is whether a translation has a slant toward a Calvinistic view of predestination.
Is Jesus a stone that causes men to stumble or a stone over which they stumble?

    1 Peter 2:8
    NIV   "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall."
    HCSB   "A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over."
                Note: Or *stone causing stumbling*
    ESV   "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."
    NASB   "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense"
    NLT   "He is the stone that makes people stumble, the rock that makes them fall."
    MSG   "It's a stone to trip over, a boulder blocking the way."
    NKJV   "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense."
    NRSV   "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall."

Some of these are too literal, and some are dynamic un-equivalent. Which are most Calvinistic?
What would be a good dynamic equivalent?

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Do translations reflect a "once saved, always saved" bias? In Luke 8:13 almost all our resource
translations have "believe for a while" or something similar. That is what the text says. Two
interpretive translations veer off the road.

MSG   The seeds in the gravel are those who hear with enthusiasm, but the enthusiasm doesn't
        go very deep. It's only another fad, and the moment there's trouble it's gone.
LB   The stony ground represents those who enjoy listening to sermons, but somehow the
        message never really gets through to them and doesn't take root and grow. They know
        the message is true, and sort of believe for a while; but when the hot winds of persecution
        blow, they lose interest.

Are there any Arminian slants to current translations? The question is most often asked
about passages that refer to receiving or accepting Jesus. In John 1:11-12 John uses two
closely related and sometimes interchangeable words to distinguish those who do not
accept Christ (*paralambano*) from those who do receive Jesus (*lambano*).[11] Is there a
reason for the different Greek verbs in this context?

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[10] The asterisks mark places at which there is more material in the longer study guide.

[11] For an example of the use of *lambano* as passive reception of a gift see 1 Cor 4:7. In Colossians 2:6
    paralambano is used for receiving Christ.

NIV He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—

HCSB He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him. But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God

ESV He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,

NET He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him – those who believe in his name– he has given the right to become God's children

NASB He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,

NKJV He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

NLT He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

MSG He came to his own people, but they didn't want him. But whoever did want him, who believed he was who he claimed and would do what he said, He made to be their true selves, their child-of-God selves.

BBE He came to the things which were his and his people did not take him to their hearts. To all those who did so take him, however, he gave the right of becoming children of God—that is, to those who had faith in his name:

NRSV He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,

None of the so-called literal translations distinguish the two verbs. The more dynamic translations interpret the verbs wrongly. Why is the New RSV the best translation?

Could there be Catholic translations in Protestant Bibles?

James 2:22
NIV You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.

NASB You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected;

ESV You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works;

HCSB You see that faith was active together with his works, and by works, faith was perfected.

NLT You see, his faith and his actions worked together. His actions made his faith complete.

MSG Isn't it obvious that faith and works are yoked partners, that faith expresses itself in works? That the works are "works of faith"?

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BBE   You see that his faith was helping his works and was made complete by them;

Beck   His faith was active by works and by works faith reached its goal.

NKJV   Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?

NRSV   You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works.

KJV   Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect ?

Luth   Durch die Werke ist der Glauben vollkommen geworden

Which English translation is not Catholic? [12]

James 2:26

NIV   As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

NASB   For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

ESV   For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

HCSB   For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

NLT   Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works.

Mess   The very moment you separate body and spirit, you end up with a corpse. Separate faith and works and you get the same thing: a corpse.

BBE   For as the body without the spirit is dead even so faith without works is dead.

Beck   Just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead,

NKJV   For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

NRSV   For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

KJV   For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. {or, breath

Any Protestant translations here? [13]

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Another interesting doctrinal study would be the rendering of terms for ministry. In the KJV it was very clear that "ministry" (*diakonia*) referred to many different forms of service in the church and outside of the church. Many more recent translations obscure the biblical usage by using "ministry" for public ministry of the Word and "service" for other forms of ministry in and outside of the church. This topic could be a study in itself, [14] but we can give just two illustrations of the issue.

1 Corinthians 12:5

NIV   There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.

NASB   there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.

ESV   there are varieties of service, but the same Lord;

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[12] It's Beck. Explain why.

[13] NLT and KJV. Why?

[14] See J. Brug, *The Ministry of the Word*, p 3-32.

HCSB   There are different ministries, but the same Lord.
        NLT   There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord.
        NET   there are different ministries, but the same Lord.
        MSG   God's various ministries are carried out everywhere
        BBE   there are different sorts of servants, but the same Lord.
        NKJV   There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord.
        NRSV   there are varieties of services, but the same Lord;
        KJV   And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.
                (administrations: or, ministries)

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A similar situation exists with various offices of ministry. The New Testament has two clear classes of ministers, the *diakonoi,* who waited on tables, and the *episkopoi* or *presbyteroi*, who served in the same office, which approximates our office of pastor. *Presbyteroi* mean "elders", but the English derivative is "priest". *Episkopoi* mean "overseers", but the English derivative is "bishop".

Philippians 1:1 mentions two offices *episcopoi* and *diakonoi.*
        NIV NET NASB ESV HCSB :   overseers and deacons
        NKJV BBE NRSV KJV: bishops and deacons
        NLT: elders and deacons.
        MSG: pastors and ministers
Evaluate each approach. Pros and cons of each?

A comparison of Titus 1:5-7 shows that one office which approximates "pastor" had two names used interchangeably: *presbyteroi* and *episcopoi*
        NIV NASB ESV HCSB: elders and overseers
        NKJV NRSV KJV: elders and bishops
        NLT: elders and elders
        MSG: leaders and church leaders
        BBE: men in authority over the churches and bishops
Evaluate each approach. Pros and cons of each?

 4. The translator should not be too locked in to one theory of translation whether "dynamic equivalence" or "literal translation"[15] because:
   a. Literal (that is, literalistic) translations sometimes give the wrong meaning or they do not communicate clearly.
   b. Dynamic equivalence, though a worthy goal, is not fully possible. We would be happy with any translation that was dynamic and equivalent, but often translations labeled "dynamic equivalent" are either not equivalent or not dynamic.
   c. The translator will have to weigh whether a more dynamic or more literal approach best conveys the divinely intended meaning on a case-by-case basis.

Luther espoused this eclectic approach: "We extolled the principle of at times retaining the words quite literally, and at times rendering only the meaning." [16]

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[15] These terms are not really adequate, but they are widely understood as representing two basic philosophies.
[16] "Open Letter on Translating," p 222–223.

Although contemporary translations slide significantly toward one end or the other of the dynamic versus literal spectrum, one of the things that became more clear to me as I worked on this paper is that there does not seem to be any of our test translations that is consistent in applying a dynamic or a literal approach.

However, there is a noticeable difference between various translations in regard to the "best use." Translations with the degree of freedom of the NIV are pleasant to read, but are inadequate for serious study of biblical vocabulary and concepts because they are too distant from the original text. For this reason a liberal Bible-rating site with an academic leaning, which loves the NRSV as the best study Bible, rates the NIV as "unacceptable for serious Bible study".[17] Several times each year in dogmatics class when we are studying a certain biblical word or concept I have to comment that the NIV is not helpful for this study because it is too free from the original to serve this purpose. Examples would be the study of the biblical idioms concerning *nephesh* and *ruach* (soul/spirit) or the range of uses of *basar* (flesh) in the Old Testament. (NIV 2011 is actually slightly better than NIV 1984 in this respect.) The handling of the terms for ministry (*diakonia* etc.) would be another example. On the other hand, translations like the ESV are less pleasant to read. From my perspective, the best Bible translation for all-round use would be half way between the NIV and ESV.

To give but one example of inconsistency in applying a philosophy of translation, the extreme of literal translation, namely, transliteration, is used by both dynamic equivalent translations and literal translations. For example in Psalm 16:1 translations as varied as the Jerusalem Bible, NIV, ESV, NKJV, and NASB all settle for the transliteration *miktam* as their rendering for the psalm type. (The data is skewed somewhat by the dynamic equivalent translations that solve the problem by omitting the heading.) Those versions that try for a dynamic equivalent translation of *miktam* fall into two camps: 1) golden ode, precious psalm, secret treasure, *or* 2) inscription, memorial, record of memorable thoughts. Another option is to adopt an undynamic equivalent: poem, song, prayer, special song, or psalm.

Sheol is another frequently transliterated word (see below).

When all else fails, transliteration is not necessarily a bad way to go. This principle comes into play with the names of musical instruments, gemstones, plants, and animals. ****

"Pedagogue" is a very literal rendering of the office of the man who attends the student in Galatians 3:24, but in modern English "pedagogue" means "teacher", but in ancient Greece this man was not a teacher, and a correct understanding of the term is essential to understanding the point of the passage.

    ESV   So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

    NIV84 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

    NIV11 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

    HCSB   The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

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[17] Mark Given, http://courses.missouristate.edu/markgiven/rel102/bt.htm

NET   Thus the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be
       declared righteous by faith.
NASB   Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may
       be justified by faith.
NKJV   Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be
       justified by faith.
NLT   Let me put it another way. The law was our guardian until Christ came; it
       protected us until we could be made right with God through faith.
MSG   The law was like those Greek tutors, with which you are familiar, who escort
       children to school and protect them from danger or distraction, making sure
       the children will really get to the place they set out for.
BBE   So the law has been a servant to take us to Christ, so that we might have
       righteousness by faith.
NRSV   Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might
       be justified by faith.
KJV   Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we
       might be justified by faith.

Which do you like best? Guardian? Tutor? Schoolmaster? Why?

Scylla: Too Equivalent

An example of an overly literal translation which communicates the wrong meaning occurred in the KJV in Psalm 16:10:

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;

Neither NKJV nor ESV are an improvement, HCSB is a minor improvement:

ESV: For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol.
HCSB: For You will not abandon me to Sheol

Jesus' soul was not in hell during the time from Good Friday evening till Easter morning. His body was in the grave. His soul was in heaven. In this passage "soul" is an emphatic, emotional way of saying "me." "Sheol" here refers to the condition of death or the grave.

NIV 1984 catches the right connotation:
because you will not abandon me to the grave [a]   Note a] Sheol
NIV 2011 introduces a strange note with its rendering of *sheol*:
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead.
This carries overtones of the mythical kingdom of the shades.

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Literal is not always best. In the Song 5:4 the lady says of her lover:
KJV   my bowels were moved for him.
NIV   my heart began to pound for him.
NASB my feelings were aroused for him.
HCSB my feelings were stirred for him
ESV   my heart was thrilled within me.
NLT   my heart thrilled within me.
MSG   the more excited I became.
NKJV my heart yearned for him.

NRSV my inmost being yearned for him.

Everyone except King James goes for dynamic equivalent.

What is the best English equivalent for "bowels" in these contexts?
Is 16:11 my bowels shall sound like an harp
Jer 4:19 my bowels, my bowels! I am pained

Another case: the Hebrew and Greek words for "kidneys" (Hebrew *kelayoth*; Greek *nephroi*; Latin *renes*, whence the old English "reins") can often be translated "heart", and "heart" can be translated "mind" (Job 16:13, Ps 139:13 Lam 3:13, Rev 2:23).   ***

Charybdis: Not Equivalent Enough

A few examples of "dynamic equivalent" translations which are not equivalent follow.

In 1 Samuel 25:22 an angry David says that he is going to Nabal's place and he is going to kill everyone who *shatans* against the wall. Which translation would you pick as the dynamic equivalent which is common and contemporary?

a. everyone who micturates against the wall
b. everyone who urinates against the wall
c. everyone who pisses against the wall
d. everyone who tinkles against the wall
e. every male *or* every man

Which do you choose as the dynamic equivalent?

If David had wanted to say "every male," there were fine Hebrew ways of saying this, but he chose a more colorful expression. It is not very credible to claim, as some do, that this expression is a euphemism for "male." It must be pejorative. In the other places where the expression occurs in the Bible it is part of a threat to kill enemies. It perhaps also carries the connotation that the men referred to are dogs. (By the way, translation c is the King James; translation e is the NIV, NKJV, and ESV. So old King James seems to win the prize for the best dynamic equivalence in this instance.)

Here are some other translations from dynamic equivalent versions which are not very dynamic and not equivalent.

TNIV and NIV 2011 sometimes change "saints" to "God's people" or something similar. "Saints" is removed about 70 times. The motive seems to be to avoid the Catholic connotation of "saint." This change would not necessarily be bad if *hagioi* was consistently translated with an expression like "God's holy people" as it is in Ephesians 1:1 and Philippians 1:1, but sometimes it is translated with a less precise term like "God's people," as it is in the passages listed below. "Saints" and "God's people" refer to the same group of people, but the terms are not equivalent.[18] A bad side effect of this translation "God's people" is that it undercuts the use of the term "saints of God" in much hymnody and literature.

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[18] Passages in which saints" (Greek *hagioi*) become "believers" include: Acts 9:32; Acts 26:10; Rom 15:31; 16:15. Passages in which "saints" become "people" or "God's people" include: Ro 8:27; 15:25; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor. 6:1, 2; 14:33; 16:15; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1; 13:13.

This illustrates a tendency which exists already in the NIV 1984 to "homogenize" terminology and to blur the distinction of synonymous or parallel terms.

> In the Old Testament *chesed* is one of the words for God's saving grace. The NIV often simply translates it as "love" rather than the traditional "mercy". In the Old Testament *chasidim* is the common title of God's people, but *chasid* does not mean "holy one," but "recipient of mercy", or "merciful", or more freely "faithful." In the Old Testament of NIV and in many other more literal translations this term is often simply translated as "godly one" or some equivalent, because of the difficulty of finding an English translation that would include both "mercied" and "merciful." In the New Testament the function of serving as the common name for God's people is served by *hagioi*. The terms *chasidim* and *hagioi* are thus the same in function, but not in meaning. This sort of distinction between function and meaning should be preserved when possible. Blurring such distinctions homogenizes the writers' preferences, often with the effect of making the style more prosaic.

At the heart of this problem is the confusion of *words* with *concepts*. "God's people" is a concept. This concept can be expressed with many different words or names. The translator should not use one term to translate the concept every time it appears. The translator should preserve the variety of biblical expressions for the concept. The translator should try to keep from jumbling words and concepts.

5. It is useful for a translation to have a set of rules and rubrics to guide the translators, but the relationship of two languages is so complex, that it is hard to image a rule or rubric which can be applied without exception.

For example, we usually translate and interpret an Old Testament passage according the interpretation of it in the New Testament (principle 7), but occasionally when the New Testament quotes an Old Testament passage from the Septuagint, the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew is not very good. If the poor translation does not affect the point that the author is trying to make, the New Testament does not always correct the weak translation. In such cases we can adopt a better translation in our rendering of the Old Testament. The example of Psalm 2:9 ("shepherd" v "smash") is discussed below in point 7.

Sometimes we are hindered in our efforts to apply good principles of translation by the weight of past tradition. The decision of the Septuagint translators to render the Hebrew term *torah* with the Greek *nomos* was not a very good choice because the range of meanings of *torah* is much wider than that of *nomos*. Following the precedent of the Septuagint, English translators adopted the convention of rendering *torah* as "law" in spite of the fact that in many contexts a word like "teaching" or "instruction" would be a more appropriate rendering for *torah*. As a result commentaries and doctrine books are filled with explanations of the diverse meanings of the word "law" in the Old Testament. Should we stick with this practice of translating *torah* as "law" or should we introduce a more diverse (and more accurate) set of renderings for *torah* in the Old Testament? (A historical question we can also ask is whether the choice of *nomos* for *torah* contributed to a legalistic understanding of *torah,* or if a legalistic understanding *torah* contributed to the translators' choice of *nomos*. Which was the chicken and which was the egg?)

A similar situation exists with the Tetragrammaton, the four-letter (*yhvh*) proper name to the true God in the Old Testament. This name, which means "he is," was probably pronounced Yahweh. But already during the Old Testament era, the standard Jewish practice was to avoid pronouncing

this name. Instead readers either said *adonai* in Hebrew or *kurios* in Greek, both of which mean "Lord". Most English translations have followed this practice, rendering the Tetragrammaton as LORD. Should we continue this long-established tradition or try to get back to the original Hebrew? I would opt for LORD because the tradition is so firmly established that it has even been entered into the pointing of the Hebrew text as we use it (actually, the form of the Hebrew text which we are currently using has the pointing of *Shema,* Aramaic for "the Name", rather than the pointing of *Adonai* which produces the English form Jehovah.) This convention is also supported by the use of archaic letters for the Tetragrammaton in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Old Testament quotations in the New Testament.

Psalm 1:2 illustrates both of these issues.

KJV	his delight is in the law of the LORD	also NASB NKJV, NRSV, ESV, NIV
GW	he delights in the teachings of the LORD	
HCSB	his delight is in the LORD's instruction	
Message	you thrill to GOD's Word	
WEB	his delight is in Yahweh's law	

Another example of the binding power of tradition is the translation "angel". Actually this is not so much a translation as a transliteration. The suggested alternative translation "messenger" is not very adequate since it is too narrow. "Representative" "envoy" and "agent" are more accurate but can any of them set aside tradition, inadequate as it is?

Is the force of tradition enough to justify the not-so-literal "wisemen" for the visitors from the East? The literal "magi" does not communicate much. Everyone seems eager to avoid the connotation of "astrologers".

NIV	Magi from the east came to Jerusalem
NASB	magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying
ESV	wise men from the east came to Jerusalem
HCSB	wise men from the east arrived unexpectedly in Jerusalem
NET	wise men from the East came to Jerusalem
NLT	some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking
MSG	a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East
BBE	there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem
NKJV	wise men from the East came to Jerusalem
NRSV	wise men from the East came to Jerusalem

Other examples of this issue: should we call the ark of the covenant "the covenant box"? should we call the manger a "feeding trough"?[19]

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[19] When I wrote the first edition this paper I thought "manger" was a rather archaic biblical term, but one of the pastors present at the conference talked about this with a member who was a farmer, who said, "We don't call them feeding troughs. We call them mangers." The authoritative definition in Wikepedia confirms that "manger" is common and contemporary: "A *manger* is a trough or box of carved stone or wood construction used to hold food for animals (as in a stable). Mangers are mostly used in livestock raising. They are also used to feed wild animals, e.g., in nature reserves. The word comes from the French *manger* (meaning "to eat"), from Latin *manducare* (meaning "to chew"). A manger is also a Christian symbol, associated with nativity scenes where Mary, forced by necessity to stay in a stable instead of an inn, placed the baby Jesus in a manger. (Luke 2:7)."

> what about "swaddling clothes"?
> should we call the tabernacle "the tent"?
> should we call the heavenly host "the army of heaven"?

A related issue is how important is it to retain heritage terms such as "justify" "sanctify," "saints," and "atonement".

Sometimes attempts of recent translations to correct or improves traditional renderings are misguided. An example is in the much loved Psalm 23.

> Psalms 23:4
> NIV   Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
> NASB   Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
> ESV   Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
> HCSB   Even when I go through the darkest valley
> KJV   Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
> NKJV   Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
> MSG   Even when the way goes through Death Valley
> NLT   Even when I walk through the darkest valley
> NET   Even when I must walk through the darkest valley
> BBE   Yes, though I go through the valley of deep shade
> NRSV   Even though I walk through the darkest valley
> NET   Even when I must walk through the darkest valley

> The Hebrew has *tzalmaveth,* which seems to be a compound word constructed from "shadow" and "death". Such compounds are very rare in Hebrew, but this is what the Masoretes wrote, and there seems to be no reason to emend the text to the abstract *tzalmmuth*.

Sometimes the early translators of Latin and English made a bad choice, but long usage sanctified and corrected the meaning of the word. The word *hilasterion* was translated "propitiation." This word emphasizes a change of God's feelings. While this meaning is contained in the Greek word and we do escape God's wrath, the word *hilasterion* was being used to translate the Hebrew *kopheret* , the name of trhe cover of the ark of the covenant, based on the root *kaphar* which emphasizes, not a change of feeling, but a complete payment. A better Latin word would have been "expiation", but over centuries of use of the KJV "propitiation" took on the meaning complete payment. The context of Scripture made the meaning clear and changed the connotation of the word. ***

Sometimes our exegetical tradition as reflected in the Confessions and nearly all the translations give the wrong idea. An example is in Romans 14:23, "whatever is not of faith is sin." The Confessions use this verse to show that the "good works" of unbelievers are sin. This is correct doctrine, but it is not the point of the passage. It is clear that in this context "faith" is confidence in the use of adiaphora. Of the translations surveyed only the most paraphrastic got it right.

> NLT But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.
> MSG But if you're not sure, if you notice that you are acting in ways inconsistent with what you believe—some days trying to impose your opinions on others, other days just trying to

please them—then you know that you're out of line. If the way you live isn't consistent with what you believe, then it's wrong.

Sometimes none of our ten base translations get it right. In 1 Corinthians 9:20-21 Paul says Christians do not live *unde*r the law, they do not live *without* law, but they do live *in* Christ's law. By saying that Christians live *under* Christ's law most translations blur the distinction Paul is making. *

NIV   To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.
        ESV NASB NET & NRSV also have "under the law of Christ" or "under Christ's law"
         BBE NKJV & KJV have some form of " under the law to Christ".
HCSB which alone has "within Christ's law" is the winner.
NLT   When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

6.   Translators should not specify one level of language and usage to be used uniformly throughout the translation because the level of language in the Bible itself varies greatly from passage to passage. In very many Bible passages the language is neither "common" nor "contemporary." The translator should attempt to translate "common" and colloquial" as "common" and "colloquial" and "lofty" and "literary" as "lofty" and "literary".

The translator should attempt to retain variety. The translator's goal is to communicate not only the informational content, but also the feelings and attitudes of the original text. The flavor and impact of the original should as much as possible be re-expressed words that express the same feeling in the receptor language.

The second most important aptitude of a translator (after a deep understanding of the doctrine of Scripture) is a feeling for the communication style of the Hebrew and Greek texts. The "feel" of the original text is what the translator is trying to produce in his own language.

<center>Old Testament</center>

There is a great variety of language and style in the Old Testament. The psalms contain language from very simple (Ps 96) to agonizingly hard (Ps 68). Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song each have style and vocabulary of their own. Even in books like Genesis and Kings the literary style varies sharply from section to section of the book. The translator should try to preserve this variety. The translator's goal is to sound archaic only if the original sounded archaic.
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 The idea that the Hebrew Old Testament is written in common "street language" is not plausible. It is highly unlikely that the average Old Testament reader would have recognized much of the Hebrew of the Bible as common, contemporary street Hebrew. The language for the most part has a level of formality that should be reflected in the translation. The Hebrew of the Old Testament is often poetic and lofty and can be described as a literary language—Biblical Hebrew. This language has numerous dialects.

<center>New Testament</center>

There is a great range of styles and levels of language in the New Testament. Each of the evangelists has his own style. Is Paul writing letters or epistles? Why is the style of Hebrews

different? John's letter delivered to the seven churches is quite different than his other letters. Luke should not sound like John. Hebrews should not sound like 1st John.

There is a range of Greek in the New Testament. The Greek of the New Testament is *koine* (common) in the sense that it is not classical literary Greek and that it could be understood by Greek speakers everywhere, but it is not *koine* in the sense that is was the language of the street throughout the Mediterranean. Greek-speaking readers would not have mistaken Jesus and the apostles for Greeks from their neighborhood. They would have recognized them as non-Greeks, as Jews. Though there is considerable difference between the simple style of Mark and the more elegant style of Luke, both of them reflect the Hebrew speech patterns of their characters.

Translations which retain the Semitic style of much New Testament speech may be stylistically awkward in English; but they may convey some of the style of the New Testament more accurately than translations that try to homogenize the language into common, contemporary English.

There are many examples of semiticizing style in the New Testament, especially in the gospels and Acts. The words of Jesus often preserve a Hebrew/Aramaic cast. ****

In the New Testament Greek words sometimes take on Hebrew meanings. The examples of *nomos/torah* and *hilas-* were discussed above. The Greek root *hilas-* takes on overtones of Hebrew *kaphar,* which make it closer in meaning to expiation (full payment) than to propitiation (appeasement) (Ro 3:25, He 2:17, 1 Jn 2:2, 4:10). Following the KJV, however, English translations have used the less correct "propitiation", but the English "propitiation" over the course of time took on the expiatory sense of *kaphar.* "Atoning sacrifice" is the translation of many contemporary versions."[20] In the New Testament the term "generation", like the Hebrew *dor,* is sometimes used to refer to a type of people rather than a group of contemporaries (in Luke 21:32 all the translations I consulted stick with "generation").

In the New Testament words are often used, not in the common sense, but in technical senses established by theological tradition.

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The Greek of the New Testament is a literary language—not the literary language of Greek writers who tried to echo the great dramatists and philosophers of the golden age of Greek literature, but a literary language which echoed the great prophets and poets of the golden age of revelation. It is not the koine Greek of the street but a literary language best called Biblical Greek. In some respects the authors of New Testament narrative were trying to produce an effect

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[20] The word expiation begins with the prefix *ex*, which means "out of" or "from." Expiation means to remove something. It is taking away or removing guilt by means of paying a ransom or offering an atonement. Thus, the act of expiation removes the problem by paying for it and satisfying the legal demand. Christ's expiation of our sin means that he fully paid the penalty for it and removed it from consideration against us.
Propitiation, on the other hand, has to do with the addressee of the expiation. The prefix in this case is *pro*, which means "for." Propitiation indicates a change in God's attitude toward us, so that we are restored to the fellowship and favor of God. In a sense, propitiation means God is appeased (there is, of course, no real change in God). Propitiation brings in the personal element and stresses that God is no longer angry with us. The result of Christ's act of expiation is that God is propitiated. In earthly dealings there can be propitiation without an expiation, but a holy God cannot be propitiated without an expiation. To compound the translator's dilemma "at-one-ment" when it was coined meant "propitiation" or "reconciliation". Today it means "expiation". Translating is a hard job.

not dissimilar to the Biblical English of those translations which try to preserve some of the flavor of the original. Since the New Testament writers were presenting the words of Jesus and the other characters in the gospels in translation, we may call their approach a precedent for a philosophy of Bible translation. The presence of these Hebraisms, which sound awkward in Greek, does not mark the language of the New Testament as "non-literary". On the contrary, it is one of the features which give to its own literary character.

Who made up the intended audience that was expected to handle this language and style? The New Testament was addressed not so much to the man (and woman) in the street, but to the man and woman in the church. The books of the New Testament were addressed primarily to an audience which had already been gathered into churches, instructed in the basic doctrines of the Christian faith, capable of recognizing distinctly Biblical usages, and able to catch allusions to the contents of the Old Testament. Our translations should reflect the needs and abilities of this same group and the stylistic level of the originals.

(Point 9 below is also relevant to the issue of archaic language in translation.)

7. The translator should adhere to the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. This is especially true in regard to doctrinal statements. One passage of Scripture cannot be set against another. New Testament interpretations of Old Testament passages should be accepted.

The Hebrew of Psalm 104:4 may be understand to say *either* that God makes his messengers winds and his servants flames of fire *or* that God makes winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants. Hebrews 1:7 says that it is the former and that this passage refers to angels. In Psalms 104 ESV opts for "angels who are winds" in agreement with Hebrews 1. NIV opts for "winds that are messengers". Holman has " making the winds His messengers, flames of fire His servants".

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Although we would say that translators should be guided by the interpretation of an Old Testament passage given to that passage elsewhere in the Bible, we would not say that every Septuagint rendering quoted in the New Testament determines the best translation for Old Testament passages. In many cases the New Testament may be just citing the familiar version without making a point in favor of a specific rendering. In Psalm 2:9, for example, the Hebrew text has a verb form that means "break" or "smash" (תְּרֹעֵם is qal imperfect, 2nd singular of רעע, a rare word). The Septuagint reads ποιμανεῖς. This apparently is a translation of a variant vocalization, תִּרְעֵם, the qal imperfect, 2nd singular of the common verb רעה, "you shepherd them." The NIV translation in Psalm 2:7, "you rule them," is a paraphrase of the reading of the Septuagint, "shepherd". This reading "shepherd" is also reflected in the allusions to this passage in Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15. The fact that Revelation follows the Septuagint reading does not necessarily mean that the Septuagint has a better understanding of the Hebrew than the Masoretic Text, but simply that the Septuagint was the Old Testament regularly used by the first readers of Revelation. The point of Christ's rule over the nations is the same in either case.

8. The translator should not drain the color and variety of expressions from passages or level the language by downgrading the imagery.

The rendering of David's colorful expression "Everyone who *shatans* against the wall" as "every male" is an example of this flaw (See the discussion under Principle 4).

"I proclaim the greatness of the Lord" is not the same as "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord" (Lk 1:46-47). When God says, "My soul hates the wicked," this is more intense than saying, "I hate the wicked."

> Isaiah 1:14
> NIV84   Your New Moon festivals and your appointed feasts my soul hates
> ESV   Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates
> HCSB   I hate your New Moons and prescribed festivals
> NIV11   Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being
> NASB   I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts
> WPV   Meetings for this, meetings for that. I hate them!
> BBE   Your new moons and your regular feasts are a grief to my soul
> NKJV   Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates
> NRSV   Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates;

> Which translation do you like? See also Psalm 11:5.

> ***

Should a translator assume that his readers can figure out some imagery, or does he have to explain everything? Solomon explains why he needs wisdom in these words:

> ESV   I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in.   KJV, NASB, RSV
> NIV   I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.
> NLT   I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around.
> MSG   I'm too young for this, a mere child! I don't know the ropes,
>   hardly know the 'ins' and 'outs' of this job.

9. The goal of a translator is not so much to make Judeans sound like 21st century Americans but to make them sound like Judeans who speak English.

    No Judean reading the book of Job would think that Job and his friends were contemporary Judeans, and when David writes a psalm that is a reflection on the themes of Job (Ps 139), his vocabulary and style are Joban.

    "Alas" and "woe" are not contemporary English, but would we want to render these terms with a contemporary expression? How would a contemporary American say, "Alas, I hit my finger with the hammer?" Striving for contemporaneity can become "too much of a good thing."

    In 1 Samuel 20:30 Saul calls Jonathan "Thou son of a perverse rebellious woman" (KJV; NIV and ESV follow suit). The Living Bible's, "You son of a bitch" is certainly dynamic and is probably roughly equivalent. It is common and contemporary American English, but perhaps too much so.

    Contemporary Americans might miss the point of Ecclesiastes' lament that "the caperberry fails" (12:5), but "the Viagra and Cialis fail" is too contemporary. How would you rate these efforts?

    > NIV   desire no longer is stirred
    > ESV & NKJV desire fails

HCSB	the caper berry has no effect;
NASB	the caperberry is ineffective
NLT	the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire

Clothing can be problematic. In Matthew 10:9 do the apostles keep their money in their girdle, their belt, their money belt, their purse, or their wallet? Did they high priest wear a belt, a sash, or a girdle? Is an "ephod" an apron, a vest, a priestly garment, or an ephod? Did the high priest wear a turban, mitre, or headdress? (Ex 24:8, 28:39)

The translator's goal is to present faithfully the original historical and cultural context as best he can. Sheep remain sheep. Slaves do not become employees. Wives still call their husband "my lord."

<center>Measurements</center>

Measurements present special problems. What measurements should be used, ancient or modern?

Genesis 6:15
NIV84 The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high.
ESV   The length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits.
NIV11 The ark is to be three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits wide and thirty cubits high.
HCSB   The ark will be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high.

It would seem that for most common objects readers would best be served by measurements in a system they understand, so at first glance that we might give the palm to NIV 1984 and Holman. So why would NIV 2011 revert to ancient cubits? There are some problems with going modern. If we convert to the modern system, should we round off the conversions so that the text is not cluttered with fractions and decimal points? And the biggest problem—if we use modern measurements, what about cases in which the measurements in the original have symbolic value, such as the measurements of the temple and land in Ezekiel 40-48 and in Revelation 22? The symbolic value of 12,000 stadia is lost if we translate into miles. And finally, do we need two versions, one metric and one American? So the translator has three choices: 1) ancient measurement in the text, modern approximation in the footnote; 2) modern conversion in the text, ancient measurement in the footnote; 3) modern measurement in the text except when the numbers have a symbolic value. All three systems have been used in contemporary translations.

Another problem is that we do not know the precise value of some of the ancient measures so conversion may be only an estimate. This is especially true with volume measures. Is the amount of flour in Matthew 13:33 "three sata," "three measures," "a large amount" (NIV), "three pecks" (NASB),[21] or "dozens of loaves" (MSG)?

Leviticus 24:5: these are some really big loaves. How big are they?
NIV   two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf.   *Thus also NET, NASB, ESV, NKJV, NRSV*
BBE   a fifth part of an ephah in every cake
KJV   two tenth deals shall be in one cake.
NLT   four quarts of flour for each loaf.   *Thus MSG and HCSB.* [22]

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[21] Three *sata* is more like five pecks.

[22] NET note says this equals 7 quarts. Estimates for an ephah vary from 22 to 35 liters, 6/10 bushel to 1 bushel. See also Ruth 2:17—how much barley did Ruth haul home? ***

Mark 4:21 refers to a μοδιον which is about two gallons. Most of the main translations make no reference to the measurement.

ESV NET NASB NLT NKJV	basket
NRSV KJV	bushel basket or bushel
NIV	a bowl
BBE	a vessel
MSG	a wash tub

Since the container is not being used to measure anything, but to cover a light, is it okay to omit the measure?

What about monetary units? Should the debtor stay in prison until he has paid the last penny or the last mite or the last farthing or the last *lepton*? (Lk 12:59) And how do we translate talents and darics to dollars or euros?

In Judges 16:5 the Philistines promise that each leader will pay Delilah "eleven hundred of silver" to betray Samson. Was this really big money or did the Philistines get a bargain? All of our translations except the Message have some variant of "eleven hundred pieces of silver" or "eleven hundred shekels". These translations are literal but mean little. This was a weight of silver not coins. Judges 17:10 shows the amount was huge. ***

Calendar references can also be problematic. In Exodus 19:1 various translations translate the same reference, "in the third month … on this day," as a reference to an interval of two months, two and one half months, or three months. The issue is whether the third month begins one and one half months from the Passover or two and one half months from the Passover, which was at a full moon.

 ****

Similar is the problem of time of day. Should we stick with terms like "sixth hour"? Is it noon or six in the morning? (John 4:6, 19:14)

 **** [At this point the study guide has an extensive section on "scientific" topics like chewing the cud, beer, lunatics, and leprosy.]

Contemporary is fleeting

Another problem is that the more contemporary a translation sounds, the more quickly it becomes dated. This can happen very quickly. After movies like *ET* some translators claimed that the word "aliens" would make readers think of extraterrestrials. Now after a decade or two, "aliens" is very common and contemporary as a term for non-citizens living in a land. "Resident aliens" would be very understandable as a term for non-Israelites who were living and working in Israel.

****

Another term often criticized in the allegedly archaic translations is whore or whoredom. Is the term "whore" making a comeback so that it no longer sounds archaic? Unfortunately it seems so.

10. Though "one Hebrew word=one English word" is not a viable standard for a translator to apply consistently, the translator should strive to be consistent rather than casual in his renderings of specific words.

One of the best illustrations of the principle that one-for-one correspondence does not work is the Hebrew word *nephesh,* glossed as "soul." The NIV lists more than 150 renderings for this word (many are variants of the same word, like "I" or "me"), but even KJV which makes more effort for a one-for-one renderings has more than 30 renderings. Most of the renderings cluster around the meanings soul, life, living creature, strong feeling, or self. The most striking rendering of *nephesh* is the NIV's "dead body", the opposite of any meaning we could reasonably expect. How did this happen? In the book of Numbers there are a number of examples of the expression a "dead *nephesh*". This can hardly mean a dead life or a dead soul. In Numbers 6:6 the Nazarite is warned that he must not touch a dead *nephesh* while he is fulfilling his vow. *Nephesh* here has the connotation of a living being or in this case, a once-living being.

    NIV   he must not go near a dead body.
    ESV   he shall not go near a dead body.
    NRSV they shall not go near a corpse.
    NASB he shall not go near to a dead person.

Do you see any practical difference in these renderings?

In spite of the fact that one-for-one does not always work, the translator should strive for a degree of consistency which preserves the identity of things that reoccur in the text. He should not jumble words and concepts. (See the discussion of "saints" and "God's people" above.)

There are two musical instruments that accompanied the music of the psalms. The *kinnor,* the instrument played by David, was probably a small lyre. The *nebel* was probably a big lyre. (Lyres have four sides, harps have three.) Since *nebel* is the big instrument the NIV appropriately translates *nebel* as "harp" in Psalm 150:3 and several other passages. "Harp" may not be technically correct for *nebel,* but it is a pretty good dynamic equivalent since it is a large stringed instrument. A 10-stringed *nebel* is mentioned in Psalms 33:2, 92:3, 144:9. Unfortunately the NIV has translated *nebel* as "lyre" and *kinnor* as "harp" in these three passages, the exact opposite of its better translations in Psalm 150:3. Thus, the NIV fails to distinguish these two instruments consistently.

They are two types of "trumpets" in Psalms. The *shofar* is made from an animal horn. The *hatzotzerah* is a metal tube. *Shophar* is sometimes translated "trumpet" by the NIV (Psalm 150:3), but at other times it is more correctly translated "ram's horn" (1 Chronicles 15:28, Psalm 98:6). There is no reason not to be consistent in such situations.

The Hebrew word *saphir* is very likely not our sapphire, but since few people know what the technically more correct *lapis lazuli* is, sapphire is a pretty good dynamic equivalent. Similar kinds of issues occur with other gem stones, trees, and birds of prey. None of these will affect doctrine, but a translator who respects the text will try to do a careful job of rendering the text also in technical details. If he cannot be sure of his identification, it is still good to be consistent. In this case the rule for baseball umpires applies: it is better to be consistently wrong about the strike zone than to be erratic and all over the place.

A more serious example of the tendency to over-interpret is the decision of NIV 1984 to regularly interpret the Hebrew and Greek words for "flesh," rather than to translate more literally so that the reader can become familiar with the idioms and the word play of the biblical text.   This approach often forces the translator to interpret *basar* as either "body" or "sinful nature" when the original "flesh" is open to either or both. In many passages this destroys word-play. Translators should not assume that modern readers cannot learn biblical idioms. Here are two passages that illustrate the problem.

> Genesis 6:3
> ESV   "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh"
> NIV11 "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal[b] [b] or corrupt
> HCSB   "My Spirit will not remain with mankind forever, because they are corrupt.
> ****

Another example is the frequent translation of *hesed* simply as "love", blurring the distinction from *ahavah,* the generic Hebrew word for love. Another idiom removed over 200 times is "house" as a term for family, clan, or tribe. In Exodus 17:14 where the text says the "memory of Amalek" is to be blotted out, the word "name" is substituted for "memory." Other examples are the homogenizing the variant names of kings in the Old Testament or of Peter and Cephas in Galatians 2. Another example is the removal of the term "Lord of hosts." If "hosts' is believed to be too archaic, "Lord of Armies" could be substituted. Though the more interpretive "Lord Almighty" has precedent in the ancient versions, a rendering more true to the Hebrew would be preferable.

> ****

More consistency in preserving the distinction of biblical terms would be an improvement to the NIV and other dynamic equivalent translations.   We should give attention not only to the authors' general thoughts but to their words. One reason that it is important to try to retain a one-for-one equivalence as much as possible is to retain "intertextual resonance" (the linking of one biblical text with another by words, phrases, and catch words). Linking by catchwords is especially important in Psalms and Proverbs.

11. The translator should try to be euphemistic where the original is euphemistic and blunt or course where the original text is blunt.

This principle is easy to enunciate. Putting it into practice is more difficult. We already touched on this issue above in the case of the men who *shatan* against the wall. It hardly is possible that this expression is euphemistic, but do we know enough about the nuances of colloquial Hebrew to know which is the best equivalent of *shatan*?

<div align="center">Text is euphemistic</div>

There are instances where the text is clearly euphemistic, so in those cases we should be euphemistic too (overall the Bible is more inclined toward euphemism, so if in doubt, euphemize).

> Genesis 4:1
> KJV ESV   Adam knew Eve his wife
> NIV 1984   Adam lay with his wife Eve
> NIV 2011   Adam made love to his wife Eve
> MSG   Adam slept with Eve his wife.
> NLT   Adam had sexual relations with his wife

Evaluate each translation. Any suggestions?

This text is clearly euphemistic. Since the result of Adam knowing his wife was that she became pregnant and gave birth, an adult reader of average intelligence can probably figure out the meaning of this euphemism. Some years ago there was a movie "Carnal Knowledge." The marketers apparently thought the audience could figure out what it means "to know someone in the biblical sense."

*** [Here there is an extensive list of the euphemisms in the study guide.]

A New Testament euphemism is found in 1 Corinthians 7:1, literally, "it is good not to touch a woman". Many translations feel a need to explain it.

NIV   It is good for a man not to marry.
NASB   it is good for a man not to touch a woman.
ESV   It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.
NET   It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman
NLT   Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations.
MSG   Is it a good thing to have sexual relations?
BBE   It is good for a man to have nothing to do with a woman.
NKJV   It is good for a man not to touch a woman.
NRSV   It is well for a man not to touch a woman.
KJV   It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

What if we are not sure whether or not the expression in the text is a euphemism?

Ezekiel 7:17: do the knees run like water or run with water?
Literal: All knees run … water
ESV   All hands are feeble, and all knees turn to water
NIV 1984   Every hand will go limp, and every knee will become as weak as water
NIV 2011   Every hand will go limp; every leg will be wet with urine

Text not euphemistic

In some cases it is clear that the text is intending to describe ugly things with ugly words. Examples of this type are most prevalent in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 16:25-26—literal: you spread your feet ….your neighbors great of flesh

NIV 2011   At every street corner you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, *spreading your legs* with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. [26] You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your neighbors with *large genitals*, and aroused my anger with your increasing promiscuity.

NIV 1984   At the head of every street you built your lofty shrines and degraded your beauty, *offering your body* with increasing promiscuity to anyone who passed by. [26] You engaged in prostitution with the Egyptians, your *lustful neighbors*, and provoked me to anger with your increasing promiscuity.

ESV   At the head of every street you built your lofty place and made your beauty an abomination, *offering yourself* to any passerby and multiplying your whoring. [26] You also

played the whore with the Egyptians, your *lustful neighbors*, multiplying your whoring, to provoke me to anger.

HCSB   You built your elevated place at the head of every street and turned your beauty into a detestable thing. You *spread your legs* to everyone who passed by and increased your prostitution. [26] You engaged in promiscuous acts with Egyptian men, *your well-endowed neighbors*, and increased your prostitution to provoke Me to anger.

If there is any doubt that this passage is blunt, it is removed by the parallel in Ezekiel 23:20, which refers to flesh and emissions like horses and donkeys. "Offering your body" and "spreading your legs" are not dynamic equivalents. "Large flesh" in this context does not mean a large sinful nature.

What are some factors that would lead you to be less graphic than the original? What if the receiving culture is so reticent in speaking about such matters that the frank language in the Bible will turn them off to the Bible? This is not a new problem. The rabbis and masoretes already wrestled with it. In a number of cases they used the *qere* to substitute euphemisms for expressions which they considered to be too indelicate or offensive to read. These *qere* must have originated when Hebrew was still enough of a living language so that certain terms for sexual relations or bodily functions could be rated as too offensive to use in a public reading. During the years in which Hebrew was a living language certain terms which were proper enough to be included in the earlier books of the Old Testament had become too vulgar to be used in public reading, at least in the opinion of the masoretes. The same thing has happened in English, in which some terms which were used in the King James Version (piss, ass) would make some people uncomfortable if used in public services today. An example of such copyists' euphemizing occurs in 2 Kg 18:27 and Is 36:12 where is Assyrian army's intimidator tells the people of Jerusalem what they will eat and drink during the siege.   In the *qere*, " water of the feet" is substituted for the *ketiv*, *shenim* "piss." In the same verses, "what comes out" is substituted for *chere*, which means "dung" or perhaps a more crude word than that. The copyists found the vulgar threat of the Assyrian envoy too crude to be read aloud, so they substituted euphemisms in the margin, but left the cruder terms in the text. Isaiah does not seem to have been troubled by the crude words. We cannot determine with certainty if the words were "proper" when Isaiah recorded them and became crude later, or if they were vulgar even when the Assyrian spoke them but Isaiah used them to honestly portray the vulgarity of the Assyrian envoy. The latter seems most likely. It is unlikely that the Assyrian army guy got his trash-talking vocabulary from Mr. Rogers. [23]

The rabbis were somewhat conflicted on this issue. On the one hand, they taught, "Whenever a text is written indelicately, we read it delicately." This is the opposite of the principle I suggested above: "if the text is indelicate, we translate it indelicately." The rabbis, however, hedged a bit on their prudery. R. Nahman said, "All obscenity is forbidden except obscenity at idolatry." R. Huna b. Manoah said, "It is permitted to an Israelite to say to a Cuthean [a Samaritan] 'Take your idol and stick it in your *shintav*.'"

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[23] Other examples: men forcefully or lustfully *shagal* women; the scribes suggest "lie with" (Dt 28:30, Is 13:16, Ze 14:2, Je 3:2);   the besieged have to eat *cheri;* the scribes suggest we read: "decayed leaves" (2 Kg 6:25) Others: Dt 28:27, 1 Sa 5:6,9,12, 6:4,5— hemorrhoids;   2 Kg 18:27, Is 36:12—substitute "what comes out and waters of your feet";   2 Kg 10:27—latrine; Dt 25:11—private parts.

So is there any good reason to elaborate on this topic besides to try to hold your attention as we head into the home stretch of this paper? Actually there is. There is probably no translation issue that reveals more about a translator's tendency to let the text speak for itself or to "improve" the text to fit in with his sensibilities and the sensibilities of his readers. If a translator does not mess with the text here, he will probably not mess with the text anywhere.

In spite of the discomfort it may cause so readers, we should stick with the principle "if the text is delicate, we should be delicate. If it is not delicate, we should not be." Not all biblical texts are intended for the pulpit or the Sunday school, but all are written for our learning.

A good test case is provided by Song of Songs. A key image in the Song is the lady's plea, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." In certain cultures this would sound like the words of a grossly immoral woman since kissing is not a suitable expression of love between adults of either the same or the opposite sex. But kissing is so interwoven into the imagery and interpretation of the Song that it is impossible to remove it without undercutting the imagery and meaning of the Song. Two ways to drain the Song of its impact are to euphemize or to allegorize its sensuality. The opposite extreme is the tendency of some modern translators and interpreters to read the Song with what Michael Fox has called a "genital focus." If there is any sexual intercourse between the couple in the Song, it takes place off stage, behind the curtain. The Song is sensual but not overtly sexual, and a translator should try to preserve this balance.[24]

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In light of the contemporary situation another issue that must be weighed is whether the translation accurately deals with the passages that refer to the sin of homosexuality, for example 1 Corinthians 6:9 in which two forms of homosexuality or homosexual practice are among the sins which bring damnation, but which can be forgiven.

NIV	nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders
TNIV	nor male prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals
NLT	male prostitutes or practice homosexuality
NRSV	male prostitutes, sodomites
NASB	nor effeminate, nor homosexuals
ESV	men who practice homosexuality
HCSB	anyone practicing homosexuality
	Note: *passive homosexual partners, active homosexual partners*
NIV11	men who have sex with men
MSG	those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex
BBE	less than a man or makes a wrong use of men
KJV	nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind
NKJV	nor homosexuals, nor sodomites
NET	passive homosexual partners, practicing homosexuals

"Male prostitutes" could be men who have sex with women or it could exclude committed relationships from the condemnation. "Effeminate" could refer to mannerisms rather than

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[24] A pastor who had studied Song of Songs with me was teaching the Song to a Spanish-speaking class in New York. When the lady was referred to with a Spanish word for "deer" (*venado*), the class laughed. He found out this word is a rough equivalent of "cougar" in contemporary English. More precisely it is a woman of any age who has lots of men. In some dialects of Caribbean Spanish it is "whore" (*puta*). Better stick with *ciervo*. Cross-cultural translation is a dangerous business.

conduct. "Practicing homosexuals" is undoubtedly right in the context, but could it be used to imply that the sin is limited to deeds. ESV and NIV11 goes for hendiadys. NET seems to do the best job on the first term, but wiffs on the second. Here is the NET note, much abbreviated:

> μαλακός "pertains to being passive in a same-sex relationship, *effeminate* esp. of *catamites*, of men and boys who are sodomized by other males in such a relationship." "the passive male partner in homosexual intercourse. As in Greek, a number of other languages also have entirely distinct terms for the active and passive roles in homosexual intercourse." See also the discussion in G. D. Fee, *First Corinthians* (NICNT), 243-44. BDAG 135 ἀρσενοκοίτης states, "a male who engages in sexual activity with a pers. of his own sex, *pederast* …of one who assumes the dominant role in same-sex activity, opposite μαλακός.

**** [Euphemisms about God]

12. Capitalization of divine nouns and pronouns that refer to God is not a feature of the original text, and therefore it falls into the category of interpretation rather than translation.

English requires titles and proper names be capitalized.

These two principles are in tension. To reproduce the Bible literalistically a translator would have to use no capitalization, but English conventions require the capitalization of proper names and of many titles. Elvis is the King not the king. LeBron James is the king, not the King.

The main problem under this category is caused by the word "spirit" (*ruach, pneuma*). In many passages it is not certain if the reference is to the Holy Spirit or to some aspect of the human spirit. Our principle 15 would say that the translator should keep both options open, but in this case it is impossible. The best the translator can do is put one option in the text and the other in a note.   In Galatians 5:17 all eight of our translations opt for capital Spirit in the main text, except for the Message, which expresses it dissent with style. (The other issue here is the rendering of "flesh".)

ESV   For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit,
         and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh.
NIV 2011 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit,
         and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.
NIV 1984 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit,
         and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature.
MSG   For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just
         as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are
         antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way
         according to how you feel on any given day.
GW   What your corrupt nature wants is contrary to what your spiritual nature wants,
         and what your spiritual nature wants is contrary to what your corrupt nature wants.

Capitalization is not inherently an issue of deity v. non-deity or of Messianic v. non-messianic. It is often simply an issue of a title or proper name versus a common noun: the Antichrist, an antichrist (1 Jh 2:18); the Evil One, an evil one or evil (Lord's Prayer); the Church or the church. A writer may use the temple or the Temple to indicate whether he is thinking primarily of the type of building that this structure is or he is emphasizing that this is the unique Temple of

Yahweh. But all of these distinctions are foreign to the biblical text, so it is unwise to adopt capitalization as a device for marking Messianic prophecy or for distinguishing direct from typical prophecy. (This will be discussed more under the point on prophecy.)

Another issue of interpretation which the translator cannot avoid is quotation marks and other punctuation marks which are not in the original text. Though an element of interpretation is involved when one adds quotation marks, inserting them cannot be avoided in English.

13. Good translation should preserve the authors' co-ordination and subordination of thought units.

   • Biblical Hebrew likes stringing many statements together with the word "and".
   • Biblical Greek, especially in some of the epistles, likes stringing a lot of coordinated and subordinated clauses.
   • Contemporary English likes short sentences. Semi-colons seem to be almost a dead form in contemporary English; and it now seems acceptable to begin sentences with "But" and "And", so that we can call them short sentences.

It seems relatively easy to break up the long Hebrew strings of co-ordination in the Old Testament. It is not so simple to break up the long subordinations and co-ordinations in the New Testament without blurring relationships which the author made explicit. We have some devices in English which can assist in this such as paragraphing and dashes, but preserving the author's connection of thoughts should take priority over too rigid an enforcement of short sentences.[25] Clarity of connections is a greater priority.

In the ESV, as in the Greek, Romans 1:1-7 is one sentence of 130 words. In the NIV it is four sentences of which the longest is 70 words.

**** [examples]

A similar situation exists in Ephesians 1:15-21. ESV has one sentence of 166 words. NIV has four sentences with the longest having 58 words.

Many contemporary translations are very concerned about short sentences. More important are the clarity and emotional impact of the sentences. "Jesus wept" is a powerful sentence. In the novel *Absalom, Absalom* William Faulkner strung together a famous sentence of 1287 words.[26] Faulkner didn't write the way he did because he lacked understanding of the craft of writing. He used long sentences and an elaborate *style* as an element of *meaning*. In describing decadent life in the post-civil-war southern America, he used a decadent style. The purpose of a sentence is to inform, to captivate, and occasionally delight. If a sentence does this, it does not matter if it is short or long, simple or complex, co-ordinate cumulative, sub-ordinate cumulative, or mixed cumulative.

Another extraneous element which introduces divisions into the biblical text is the chapter and verse divisions. The translator will have to decide on the role of the verses in determining

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[25] Another example of language-to-language variability is word order. Because of the limitation on word order that is demanded by English grammar, English cannot produce the effect of special word order in Hebrew, but it can reproduce the effect is some other way. For example, if the Hebrew word order is emphatic, the emphasis can be produced by some other device in English.

[26] I took Guiness's word on this.

the paragraphing of the translation. Is each verse a paragraph or should they be grouped by thought?

14. Translators should be wary of importing their stylistic preferences into the text against the preference of the author, where such changes are not necessary for clear communication.

In Jonah 3:3 Nineveh is called "a great city to God." Some claim this simply means a really great city. But if the author simply wanted to say Nineveh was "great city" or even "a really big city" there were simple Hebrew words to do this. He, in fact, had done that in verse 2. Moreover, the most important single point of the book of Jonah is the contrast between God's love for the city and Jonah's disdain. Young's Literal Translation stands almost alone here in rendering "Nineveh hath been a great city before God", but is there really any need here to homogenize the idiom and relegate God to the footnote?

Other similar decisions may have a more widespread effect. In NIV 2011 in the New Testament "Christ" is changed to "Messiah" about 60 times when the translators believe that the Greek *christos* functions as a title:

> So where the term is clearly used to designate the God-sent deliverer of Jewish expectations (primarily in the Gospels and Acts), it was judged more appropriate to use "Messiah (Mt 16:15). However, "where this sense seems less prominent (primarily in the Epistles), the transliteration of the Greek word ("Christ") has been retained."

Perhaps this sounds natural in some cases in the gospel narratives in which Jews are speaking, but in 1 John 5:1, John says to his primarily Gentile readers, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah is born of God" (TNIV only). Romans 9:5 refers to "the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all." See also Revelation 11:15, 12:10. The translators' decision to make this change into a general rule of translation seems to be dubious, because a stylistic decision made by the TNIV translators was allowed to overrule the stylistic decision made by the New Testament writers. If the New Testament writers had wanted to retain a Hebrew/Aramaic expression in their Greek writings, they could easily have done so, as John does in John 4:25, where he places "Messiah" and "Christ" side by side, or in the instances where the writers retain such terms as *abba, talitha qum, rabboni,* and *maranatha.*

A good example of the case for keeping Hebrew terms when the Greek of the New Testament retains them is Jesus' solemn *amen, amen* in John 8:34.

    NIV   Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth"
    NASB Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you"
    ESV   Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you"
    NET   Jesus answered them, "I tell you the solemn truth"
    NLT   Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth"
    MSG   Jesus said, "I tell you most solemnly"
    BBE   This was the answer Jesus gave them: Truly I say to you
    NKJV Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you"
    NRSV Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you"
    KJV   Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you

Not one of the cited translations keeps Jesus' Amen. One would think "amen, amen" would be a good Evangelical idiom.

A variation of this neglect of the Scripture's style is the TNIV's decision in Psalms to relegate *selah* to the notes. The explanation given is: "Although *selah*, used mainly in the Psalms, is probably a musical term, its meaning is uncertain. Since it may interrupt reading and distract the reader, this word has not been kept in the English text, but every occurrence has been signaled by a footnote." I don't know whether or not David said *selah* when he sang or recited the psalms to the Levites (I think he probably did not), but why prefer the translators' stylistic feelings over more than 2000 years of textual tradition? Isn't the very point of *selah* to serve as an interruption for reflection?

A more drastic form of this error is relegating the headings of the psalms to footnotes as Good News Bible does or arbitrarily omitting them as NEB does.

15. Where possible, when the text, on the basis of Scripture, is open to two equally valid understandings, the translator should attempt to preserve both options. When this is not possible, one of the options can be preserved in a footnote. [27]

Two examples of this problem have already been discussed above:
      flesh as sinful nature or mortal nature (pt 10)
      spirit v. Spirit (pt 12)

Are νεκρων εργων in Hebrews 6:1 "dead works" or "works that lead to death" (NIV)? Can a translation include both options or is a note needed?

An interesting example of this problem is found in Hosea 6:7: "they have broken the covenant כְּאָדָם—like Adam, like mankind, or at Adam?

      NIV   Like Adam, they have broken the covenant
      ESV   Like Adam they transgressed the covenant
      NASB Like Adam they have transgressed the covenant
      BBE   Like a man, they have gone against the agreement
      NKJV Like men they transgressed the covenant
      NET   At Adam they broke the covenant
      NRSV At Adam they transgressed the covenant;
            there they dealt faithlessly with me.

"Like Adam" presupposes that Hosea was familiar with Genesis. The third option "at Adam" assumes a change from *b* to *k*. This change is justified by the appearance of the word "there" in the second clause. However, we know of no special act of treachery at Adam on Jordan. Here one must choose one interpretation and put the others in a footnote.[28]

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[27] In general, translators' should not use footnotes when they can't make up their mind which translation they like best. Footnotes should be reserved for significant differences or significant variants.

[28] Other passages that may lend themselves to "sons of Adam": Ps 90:3 (see HCSB) ;Ps ll:4, Ps 89:47, and Dt 32:8.

The difficulty of applying this principle is illustrated by Nehemiah 5:7 where Nehemiah forbids "charging interest," "exacting usury," or "seizing collateral"? Is there an English translation that can cover all of these?

16. In trying to produce gender accurate language the translator will strive to be inclusive where the original is inclusive and exclusive where the original is exclusive.

This is the most controversial issue in Bible translation right now. It is at the heart of the conflict between supporters of NRSV, TNIV, and NIV 2011 on the one end and supporters of ESV and Holman in the middle, and King James and NKJV at the other end. Some of the main points of the controversy include whether "man" can still be used in a generic sense to refer to "human beings" and whether singulars can be changed to plurals to avoid masculine pronouns. In this paper we cannot do more than outline the issues and suggest topics for study.

Giving principles for Bible translation is much like giving principles for investing. It is very easy to state good principles. The investing principle I follow is "Buy the stocks that are going to go up. Do not buy the stocks that are going to go down." I believe this is a great principle that needs little explanation. The problem is not in stating the principle. The problem is in applying the principle to specific cases, as we shall see.

<div align="center">Man</div>

Let us take the "man" issue first. Hebrew and Greek have a pair of words, *ish* and *aner,* that refer to male beings as their default meaning. They have another pair of words, *adam* and *anthropos,* which are more open to an inclusive meaning which includes males and females. Neither of these is an absolute distinction. Context can indicate exceptions. Sometimes the word-pairs are distinct from one another; sometimes they may be used interchangeably.

Adam includes a person of each gender in Genesis 1:27 (see also 1:26; 5:1-2).

NIV   So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

TNIV   So God created human beings in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

NIV11   So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

ESV   So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

NRSV   So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them

But in many places it is clear that *adam* can refer to an individual male (Ge 2:7-8, Ge 2:15-16) or to "man" rather than "woman" (Ge 2:22, 3:8, 3:20). A complicating factor is the use of *Adam* as the name of the first male. Does "sons of *adam"* merely mean "humans" or does it remind us of our descent from the man who came from the earth and will return to it? And how does one keep the connotation of "earth-man" when it is part of the picture?

Anthropos includes all people in 1 Timothy 2:4.

NIV 1984 [God] wants all men to be saved
NIV 2011 [God] wants all people to be saved

ESV [God] desires all people to be saved.
Note: here the inclusive "people" is better than "men"
because it brings out the contrast with the "man" and
"woman" passages that follow.

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<div align="center">Everyone/they</div>

Perhaps here is the place for an aside on the singular/plural conflicts which recent translators produce in their efforts to avoid masculine pronouns. In the example above from James 1 they want to avoid "him" in the second part of the sentence but they don't want to use "persons" in the first part of the sentence because they don't want to be criticized for removing the more personal individual emphasis of the singular form.

There are, of course, cases in which a singular/plural shift makes sense or even is required: "Everyone liked the picnic, but they did not like the mosquitoes."[29] "Everyone was in their shorts" is correct but not without its unclarities. [30] Here is an example of a good singular/plural shift from the Bible: Everyone (πας) who competes in the games goes into strict training. They (εκεινοι) do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever (1 Cor 9:25). Here the shift of number is in the Greek text. It is not manufactured by the translator.

The issue becomes more complicated when the translator starts promiscuously changing biblical singulars to plurals. In many cases there may be "no harm, no foul." But when the principle is applied indiscriminately ambiguities and misleading renderings are created and the linguistic gymnastics at times border on the silly. Compare these three efforts.

NIV1984 If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat
            with him, and he with me.
TNIV   If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat
            with them, and they with me.
NIV2011 If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat
            with that person, and they with me.

 The statement about "having one's cake and eating it" would seem apropos here. It should be possible for translators, if they wish to avoid masculine pronouns, to do so without irritating readers who have a feeling that traditional rules of agreement still apply to literary prose. Few people will be offended by good grammar. NIV 2011 has attempted to retreat from some of the excesses of TNIV, but this area still can use a lot of work. [31]

<div align="center">Additional Examples</div>

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[29] I can't say : "Everyone liked the picnic, but he did not like the mosquitoes." Why not say: "All of them liked the picnic, but they did not like the mosquitoes."

[30] Presumably they had more than one pair. Why not say "Everyone was wearing their own shorts" or "everyone was wearing shorts" as the context requires.

[31] And we have not even touched on a couple of other factors in the problem, such as the reckless abandon with which Hebrew sometimes jumps back and forth between singular and plural and the disappearance of the distinction between singular and plural "you" in English.

An interesting test of the tendency of translations to strive for gender neutral language is provided by Hosea 9:7.

ESV   the prophet is a fool; the man of the spirit is mad

NIV 1984   the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac

NIV 2011   the prophet is considered a fool, anyone who is inspired a maniac

NASB   the prophet is a fool, the inspired man is demented

NLT   the prophets are crazy and the inspired men are fools!

MSG   the prophet is crazy! The 'man of the Spirit' is nuts

BBE   the prophet is foolish, the man who has the spirit is off his head,

NKJV   the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is insane,

NRSV   the prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad!

NIV 2011 stands alone here. Even NRSV keeps "man of the Spirit".

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Women

Only rarely do the words for women create an issue (unless there is a choice between "woman" or "wife"). NIV 2011, however, creates an issue in Nahum 3:13 where it translates "women" as "weaklings": "Look at your troops—they are all weaklings!" instead of "Look at your troops—they are all women!" (At least in this case they cannot be accused of trying to mollify feminists.) A defense of this translation would be that the point of comparison is women's relative lack of upper body strength compared to men. The only other translation that I found that bought this approach was the Message: "Your warriors are wimps. You're sitting ducks." In this rendering of the Message, as well as in Isaiah 19:16, Jeremiah 50:37 and 51:30, and Isaiah 3:12, it is clear that upper body strength is not the only issue. Zeal in war is another part of the picture. Perhaps also blood-thirstiness. The intended meaning of a text is at risk when a translator takes it upon himself (or herself or themselves) to "fix" or "improve" points of the text that are an embarrassment to them.

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Here is one example of the woman or wife issue from 1 Corinthians 11:3:

NIV   Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head
       of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

NASB   But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the
       man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

NLT   But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ,
       the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

ESV   But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of
       a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

MSG   In a marriage relationship, there is authority from Christ to husband, and
       from husband to wife. The authority of Christ is the authority of God.

Here ESV adopts a translation that cannot be justified from the context, though it does not make as big a mess as the Message. This translation destroys the parallel between the man and woman in the following verses.

**** [Complications of social classes]

Humans or Men?

Sometimes boiler plate application of the inclusive language principle produces results that raise as many questions as they answer. One case of this is in Ezekiel 1:5, 10, 26. Do the cherubim have a face and form like a man or like a human being?

NIV 1984 Each of the four had the face of a man
NIV 2011 Each of the four had the face of a human being
ESV   Each had a human face

Since there is a distinction between animal and human face, it is hard to argue against "human form", but how is the artist to draw the face: male, female, or androgynous? More to the point does the vision of God in verse 26 resemble a man, a woman, or an undifferentiated human?

Fathers, Sons, and Brothers

Similar issues of inclusive reference apply to the Hebrew and Greek terms for fathers, sons, and brothers.

Fathers/Parents/Ancestors

The Greek *patres* can mean "parents" but this usage is rare. An example is found in Hebrews 11:23, in which Moses is hidden by his "fathers" that is, his parents. But this may well be a Hebraism since Hebrew has no word for parents. Greek has a word that could have been used here, *goneis* (Lk 2:27, 21:16).

In NIV 2011 "fathers" is regularly changed to "ancestors" except in expressions like "God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob".

Sons/Children

The Hebrew *banim* or *bnei* "sons" can sometimes be inclusive of all children or descendants of either sex. The *bnei-Yisrael* at the beginning of Exodus 1 are specifically named and enumerated as the twelve sons of Jacob. Throughout most of the Exodus account, when the term refers to the whole nation, the standard translation has been "children of Israel." An especially noteworthy case is 2 Corinthians 6:18 in which Paul renders the "sons" from 2 Samuel 7:14 as "sons and daughters".

Galatians 3: 26 is an especially interesting case because of the issue of whether "sons" here has connotations of maleness or also of inheritance.

NIV84 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,
NASB For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
ESV   For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
NET   For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.
BBE   Because you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
NKJV   For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
NLT   For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
MSG   By faith in Christ you are in direct relationship with God.
NRSV For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.
NIV11 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith

KJV   For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
Any choices here catch your eye?

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Brothers/Sisters

More specific issues arise when translating the Greek *adelphoi* as "brothers and sisters". The term and its Hebrew equivalent *achim* can sometimes have an inclusive sense (Dt 15:12—your brother, a Hebrew male or Hebrew female", אחיך העברי או העבריה). Here the inclusive sense is specifically indicated in the text. Problems arise, however, when this principle is too casually applied to cases in which there is no clear contextual evidence of the inclusive meaning. The results in such cases may be dubious or may even be doctrinally wrong.

The two extremes here are insisting on retention of "brothers" unless there is an explicit statement or overwhelming contextual evidence of inclusiveness *or* jumping to the inclusive "brothers and sisters" in spite of lack of evidence or even the presence of evidence to the contrary. The heart of the problem is that *adelphoi* is not strictly equivalent to the English "brothers" since it may include females and *adelphoi* is not strictly equivalent to the English "brothers and sisters" since that phrase explicitly includes females whereas *alelphoi* does not. This is a complicated issue which requires its own article. Here are a few of the issues which must be explored:
1) Can we jump to the conclusion that passages that use only "brothers" are intended to be inclusive? When New Testament speakers or writers wanted to make it clear that brothers and sisters were involved, they could and did use both words (Mt 13:55,56. Mt 19:29, Mk 10:29, Lk 14:26, 1 Cor 7:15, Ja 2:15, Mk 3:33 see variant). Luke 21:16 is an interesting text since it uses the inclusive word "parents" for father and mother, but then uses the more exclusive term "brothers" in what seems to be a reference to male and female siblings. See a similar pairing in Matthew 12:49-50.
2) Can the term "brothers" include men and women without contextual indicators?
3) Is there any clear case where it can clearly be demonstrated from the context that "brothers" is intended to address both the males and females who were present? (An example would be if Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were addressed as "brothers".)
4) Where is the burden of proof? Do we assume "brothers" unless there is clear evidence to the contrary? Or do we assume "brothers and sisters" unless there is clear evidence to the contrary?

Some Cases

In Philippians 1:14-15 NIV2011 renders *adelphoi as* "brothers and sisters" and describes these brothers and sisters as those who proclaim the gospel. Is this implying that men and women were pastors who preach or is it referring to the sharing of the gospel done by all Christians? Verses 15 and 16 seem to suggest that Paul is thinking of public preachers here.

An analogous case occurs in 1 Corinthians 14:39, in which "sisters" are included in the exhortation to "be eager to prophesy" shortly after the women are told to "remain silent" in church. It is true that women "prophesied" in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:5) and also elsewhere (Acts 21:9), but in this context is the addition of "sisters" a careless, unsafe assumption?

Even more dubious is Acts 1:16 in which those who are to participate in choosing a replacement for Judas are addressed as *andres adelphoi,* "men, brothers". It is very likely women were present, but were they asked to participate in the selection of the apostle?

Is there really any reason to remove "brothers" from Deuteronomy 18:15, the prophecy of the coming prophets and Prophet?

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Conclusion

The gender issue requires a paper of its own, as your arrangements committee recognized. Here we have to limit ourselves to stating the general principle, "be inclusive where the original is inclusive and exclusive where it is exclusive," and to illustrating a few of the difficulties in applying the principle.

Marriage Issues

A related issue for translators is the need to understand how biblical marriage customs differ from ours. We celebrate the legal marriage, the festivities, and the consummation in one day. In ancient Israel, the legal marriage usually preceded the festivities and consummation by some time. So it was possible for a considerable amount of time for a woman to be "married" and "not married" at the same time. Was the man to whom she was betrothed her husband or her fiancé?

**** [An extensive list of marriage terms: betrothal, concubines, bastards, etc.]

17. The translator will recognize and preserve direct prophecy where the immediate context or other testimony of Scripture indicates direct prophecy. (Ditto for typical prophecy.)

Here is another issue that needs its own paper,[32] but we will have to limit ourselves to outlining some of the main issues as they pertain to translation.

This became a front burner issue when the RSV and other recent translations rendered "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 as "young woman." Another issue in the debate was whether there are Old Testament prophecies that pointed directly to Christ as their fulfillment or whether most "prophecies" originally referred to something else but they became "prophecies" when they were given a new application by the synagogue or church to a Messiah or specifically to Jesus.

We recognize three main types of messianic prophecies:

1) Direct prophecies that point directly to Christ, such as Isaiah 7:14 that points to the virgin birth, or Psalm 16 that points to Christ's resurrection.
2) Typical prophecy in which something or someone in the prophet's experience points to a greater fulfillment in Christ's life. The traitor Ahithophel in David's life foreshadows Judas in Jesus' life.

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[32] A supplemental paper "The Principles and Practices of Bible Translation Applied to Prophecy" will be available in the WLS online essay file in early June 2012.

3) Intermediate fulfillment in which an event or person which is still future to the prophet points to a greater fulfillment in Christ. David will have a son who will build God's house. Solomon is an intermediate fulfillment but the great fulfillment is in Christ.

There was a controversy about this in the Missouri Synod in which one seminary (St. Louis) tended to make everything typical, while the other seminary (Springfield/Fort Wayne) tended to make everything direct. This debate had an effect on translations, commentaries, and study Bibles. The biggest weakness of the *Concordia Self-Study Bible* is that it is poor in the recognition of direct prophecy. The notes of the more recent *Lutheran Study Bible* are somewhat of an improvement. Here we will deal with this issue only as a translation issue.

We begin with Isaiah 7:14, which is the most crucial test. If a translator does not see direct prophecy here, he likely sees it nowhere.

NIV 1984 The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son
NIV 2011 The virgin* will be with child and will give birth to a son *Or young woman
ESV   The virgin shall conceive and bear a son
HCSB   The virgin will conceive
NASB   Behold, a virgin* will be with child and bear a son   *Or maiden
NKJV   Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son
NLT   The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son
NRSV   Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son
MSG   A girl who is presently a virgin will get pregnant. She'll bear a son

Evaluate NIV 2011 and MSG. What does "maiden" mean?

I do not recommend capitalization as a marker of direct prophecy unless a title is involved, but its presence or absence may give us information about the translators' view of prophecy. Psalm 2:2 provides an illustration.

NIV 1984   against the LORD and against his Anointed One
NIV 2011   against the LORD and against his anointed
NASB   against the LORD and against His Anointed
ESV   against the LORD and against his anointed

Are these differences of style or differences of interpretation?

Another example of the capitalization issue is Angel of the Lord (Ze 12:8 and 3:1).   ****

Another key test is Psalm 45, in which the king or King is addressed as God.

NIV84   Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
NIV11   Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
            Note: *Here the king is addressed as God's representative.*
HCSB   Your throne, God, is forever and ever
             Note: *Your divine throne is*, or *Your throne is God's*
ESV   Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.
NASB   Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
NLT   Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.
RSV   Your divine throne endures forever and forever.
NRSV   Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.

MSG   Your throne is God's throne, ever and always;

The note in NIV 2011 would allow or even suggest the understanding that originally this psalm was not a prophecy but simply a hyperbole about the king of Israel. Hebrews 1:18-19 does not allow this interpretation of the passage. The Holman note also opens the door for this approach. The NRSV backs off from the first RSV interpretation. The Message is a mess.

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A conflict concerning the shift of number and gender arises in connection with Psalm 8:4-6, a psalm recognized in Hebrews and in Lutheran interpretation as a prophecy of Christ.

NIV 1984 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? [5]You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. [6]You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

NIV 2011   what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? [5]You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. [6]You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet:

HCSB   what is man that You remember him, son of man that You look after him? [5]You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. [6]You made him lord over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet:

This passage deserves an article of its own because there are others issues besides the singular/plural and the gender neutral issues, but here we have to limit ourselves to the observation that the translation of Psalm 8 in the NIV 2011 makes it difficult, perhaps even impossible, for a reader to see the messianic interpretation in Psalm 8 as it stands. A reader might still be able to read the messianic interpretation back into the psalm from Hebrews 2, but this translation makes the NIV appear to support the view that the messianic meaning was not there originally but was read into the psalm later. I do not think this removal of the singular forms from Psalm 8 was a conscious attempt to remove the prophecy (the singular form critical to the messianic interpretation was retained in Genesis 3:15). It seems more likely that the focus on gender neutral language made the translators oblivious to what they were doing to the messianic import of the passage.

The fact that most of the translators of NIV 1984, TNIV, and 2011 appear to see only typical prophecy in the Old Testament [33] increases the reason for concern, since for some Evangelicals "typical prophecy" increasingly means post-facto prophecy. It also is a cause for concern that more capitalization is retained in later messianic prophecies such as in Zechariah, but not in the early prophecies. [34]

Psalm 8 is not the only instance where the singular to plural shift blurs recognition of messianic prophecy. Would a shift to the plural in Psalm 34:20 blur the connection with John 19:36? This would apply whether the prophecy is typical or direct.

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[33] See Kenneth Barker, *The Accuracy of the NIV*, p 33, 24, 34, 41-42 for a statement. Genesis 3:15, Psalm 16:10, and Isaiah 7:14 are among the verses listed as generic typological prophecies.
[34] This issue will be discussed more in the supplemental paper on prophecy.

NIV84   he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.
NIV84   he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.
TNIV   he protects all their bones, not one of them will be broken.
NIV11   he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.
NASB   he keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken.
ESV   he keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
TLB   God even protects him from accidents.

In Psalm 69:8 would a gender change lessen the connection with John 7: 5?

NIV85   I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons;
NIV11   I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother's children;
NASB   I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons.
ESV   I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.
NLT   Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me; they treat me like a stranger.
MSG   My brothers shun me like a bum off the street; My family treats me like an
             unwanted guest.
BBE   I have become strange to my brothers, and like a man from a far country to my
             mother's children.
NKJV   I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children;
NRSV   I have become a stranger to my kindred, an alien to my mother's children.
KJV   I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's
             children

A number of other translation issues have been raised about prophetic passages in NIV 2011 v ESV.

In Psalm 72 the Hebrew verbs are translated as a prayer ("May the king do these things") rather than as a future reality ("The king will do these things").

NIV1984   He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.
NIV2011   May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.
NASB   May he judge Your people with righteousness And Your afflicted with
             justice.
ESV   May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!

Some claim that "may he" diminishes the prophetic force, but the Hebrew permits either translation, and translations that uphold prophecy adopt either option.

In Daniel 7:13 and 8:17, NIV 2011 retains "son of man" rather than "human being" but bases this more on tradition than translation principle. The footnote to 7:12 says: The phrase "son of man" is retained as a form of address here because of its traditional associations.

   ***.

Micah 5:2 presents an interesting case that tests the line between translation and interpretation. The passage ends with this description of the Messiah:

Lit.   his goings out from before, from the days of eternity (*'olam*)
NIV   whose origins are from of old, from ancient times
NASB   his goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity

ESV   whose origin is from of old, from ancient days
NLT   one whose origins are from the distant past
MSG   his family tree is ancient and distinguished
BBE   whose going out has been purposed from time past, from the eternal days
NKJV   whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting
NRSV   whose origin is from of old, from ancient days
KJV   whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting

The most traditional interpretation is that this is a reference to Christ's eternal generation, but would that be a plural? Some say "majestic plural." Many recent translations take it as a reference to his descent from the patriarchs and kings. But does the plural actually refer to his appearances as the Angel of the Lord? Compare John 1:10?

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If Isaiah 7:14 is one end of the spectrum for testing Messianic references, Genesis 4:1 is the other. Only Luther and Beck see Eve's words as a Messianic reference, "I have gotten a Man, Lord." In any case this is a moot issue, because if Eve was intending to refer to the Messiah, she was wrong.

18. Though this is not strictly speaking a translation issue, a key decision by a translator is which text he is going to translate. A translation project will need a set of principles to guide translators in evaluating variants. I did not make a fresh study of this for this paper, but will make a couple of observations about the textual principles of various versions:

The textual basis for the ESV and NIV are similar, with the NIV showing somewhat greater preference for shorter readings and for the Alexandrian text family in choosing which variants to adopt. The NIV also exhibits more readiness to resort to readings from the secondary sources. The King James and New King James use the *Textus Receptus*, which provides a much fuller text. A variety of this text is called the *Majority Text*. Because a study of this issue is beyond the scope of our assignment here, I have placed a summary of the textual basis of these translations in an appendix.

Here I will comment briefly on just four test cases. The most notorious is the famous or infamous *Comma Johanneum* in 1 John 5:17.

"For there are three that bear record *in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth,* the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

Of the nine translations I monitored only the KJV and NKJV have the words: "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth." There is almost no Greek evidence to support this verse, so this verse is the litmus test of whether a translation will follow the so-called majority text wherever it leads. (I have attached an appendix on this topic to the study guide.)

Another interesting test verse is John 3:13. Only KJV and NKJV have the words in italics.

No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven*, that is, the Son of Man *who is in heaven.*

Here the case for omission is not very strong. On the contrary the case for inclusion is strong. Most witnesses, including some "important ones" have "who is in heaven." A few others

have variations on this phrase, such as "who was in heaven" or "the one who is from heaven". The witnesses normally considered the best by many modern translations do not have the phrase. If we consider both the manuscript evidence and the reading which best explains the others, the evidence is for inclusion. (See the note in the appendices of the study guide.)

Romans 11:6 is another case of King James against the world:

NIV   And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no
           longer be grace. '
ESV   But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise
            grace   would no longer be grace.
NASB But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise
            grace is no longer grace.
NRSV But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace
            would no longer be grace.
NKJV And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no
            longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work
            is no longer work.
KJV   And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more
            grace. *But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is
            no more work.*

The reading has some early support, but the UBS textual commentary dismisses it as an artificial addition.

An interesting variant that figures into the discussion of the mode of baptism is found in Mark 7:4. ESV NKJV KJV and NET include dining couches or tables among the baptized items. NIV NASB NLT MSG BBE and NRSV do not have dining couches.

What would I prefer as a guideline? I would prefer a fuller text, which includes any reading with substantial support and notes its absence from some manuscripts with a note, rather than the bias toward a shorter text that seems to be preferred today. For starters I would say: In the Old Testament stick with the Masoretic Text unless there are cogent reasons to depart from it. In the New Testament start with the latest Nestle/Aland text and restore significant deletions which have substantial textual support. If a group is doing a revision rather than a fresh translation, use the text of the version you are revising, unless you find compelling reason to alter it.

A related topic of interest from the Old Testament is how willing a translation is to emend the Masoretic text without support from the versions. Two examples will illustrate the issue.

In Psalm 72:16 the Hebrew says, "they from the city will flourish." Many translations stumble at the introduction of people into the agricultural imagery of the text and remove the reference to the city by emendation of the text.

NIV   let it thrive like the grass of the field
NASB   may those from the city flourish like vegetation of the earth
HCSB   may people flourish in the cities like the grass of the field.
ESV   may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field!
NET   may its crops be as abundant as the grass of the earth!
NLT   may the people thrive like grass in a field

MSG   praises springing from the city like grass from the earth
BBE   may its stems be unnumbered like the grass of the earth
NKJV   those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth
NRSV   may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field
KJV   they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth

It is hard to see why the text needs to be emended here. The reference to the city makes it clear that the passage is not about agriculture but about missions. See Jesus' remark in John 4: "The fields are ripe for the harvest."

In Psalm 73:4 the Hebrew says that the wicked have no pains to their death. Some translations divide *lemotam* (at their death) into two words, *lemo tam,* "to them, wholeness." There is not manuscript evidence to support this.

NIV   They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.
ESV   For they have no pangs until death; their bodies are fat and sleek
NASB   For there are no pains in their death, And their body is fat.
NET   For they suffer no pain; their bodies are strong and well-fed.
NLT   They seem to live such painless lives; their bodies are so healthy and strong.
MSG   At the top, envying the wicked who have it made,
BBE   For they have no pain; their bodies are fat and strong.
NKJV   For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm.
NRSV   For they have no pain; their bodies are sound and sleek.
KJV   For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. (firm: Heb. Fat)

Conclusions

1) Translating is hard work, especially when a foreign language is involved.[35]
2) Translation is not an exact science that can be governed by a rigid set of rules.
3) A translation needs to be guided by a set of principles and rubrics.
4) No translation will please everyone. In fact, no translation will totally please the translator for more than a day or two.
5) Not one *i* or one dot of an *i* of God's Word will pass away, but every translation passes away.
6) The day of one (or even two or three) translations that will serve the whole English-speaking church is gone, at least for the foreseeable future.
7) The day of one translation that will please everyone in a church body is probably gone, at least for the foreseeable future. The ESV has not produced a consensus in the Missouri Synod, and Holman has not produced a consensus among Southern Baptists.
8) The translator's greatest attribute is understanding and acceptance of all the doctrines of Scripture.
9) The translator's greatest responsibility is to carry over the meaning of the text.
10) A translator cannot always preserve all the nuances of the text.
11) The translator's second greatest responsibility is to carry over the emotional impact of the text.
12) The translator should try to preserve the literary flavor of the text. The original texts vary greatly in level of language and literary style, and translations should reflect this.

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[35] We are, of course, constantly translating and interpreting words and texts in our own language every day.

13) The translator's second most important attribute is a feeling for the language and communication style of the original texts.
14) The translator's third most important attribute is a feeling for the language and communication style of a wide spectrum of contemporary English.
15) In short, the translator's goal is to produce a text that is a much like the original text as he can possibly make it.

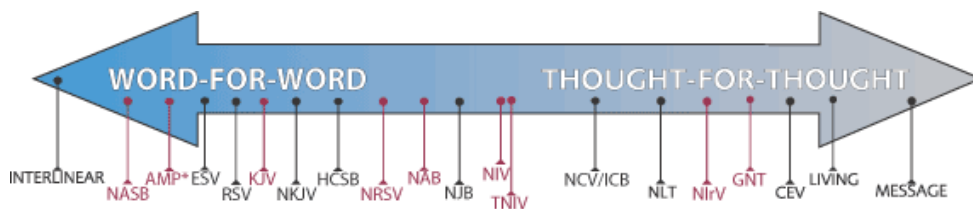# Appendix A: Rubrics for Translators

A sample of the kind of rubrics that a translation committee needs to develop.

1. LORD for the Tetragrammaton. Lord for Adonai. Lord God for Adonai Elohim.
2. Use "law" for *torah.*
3. Normally avoid contractions.
4. Prefer the bare vocative, rather than O God, etc. (though "O God" is common and contemporary)
5. Have a uniform translation for the names of animals, trees, gems, musical instruments, etc.
6. Use ancient monetary measurements except in idioms like "pay the last penny."
7. Use feet, pounds, gallons, etc. , except when the ancient measure is necessary to the imagery.
8. In the OT law were they servants or slaves? Are church workers servants or slaves of God?
9. Keep Ark of the Covenant, Tabernacle, and Temple.
10. Keep basic idioms like "flesh", "walk with God", etc.
11. Distinguish the temple sanctuary from the temple complex.
12. Preserve heritage terms like sanctify, justify, angels, and saints, but not to the exclusion of "make holy" and "declare righteous", etc.
13. Should we keep the term "womb"? If not, what will we substitute?

Abbreviations

NIV   New International Version, moderate dynamic equivalent, Evangelical
TNIV   Today's New International version, failed revision of NIV 1984
NIV11 Shifts toward the "gender-neutral" end of the spectrum
HCSB   Holman Christian Standard Bible, more in the middle, Southern Baptist
ESV   English Standard Version, revision of the RSV, toward the literal end of the spectrum
NET   NET Bible. Free online Bible with extensive notes. Used by both TNIV and ESV
         translators. The philosophy is closer to TNIV.
NASB   New American Standard Bible, one of the most literal.
NKJV   New King James Version, quite literal and fullest text.
NLT   New Living Translation. Rather free paraphrase. Evangelical.
MSG   The Message. Too free to be called a translation.
BBE   Bible in Basic English, British style.
NRSV   New Revised Standard Bible. Main line. Moderately literal. Gender inclusive.

This is Zondervan's chart. I would place NIV a bit to the right. Also is the ESV more word-for-word than the KJV? I would not call NLT and the Message dynamic equivalent translations. They are off the end of the arrow.

See http://www.tateville.com/translations.html for a conservative rating site.