

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Which is the best Bible Version?

Which is the best Bible Version? - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/22 3:19

This is a thread which would be charged with a lot of strong feelings, but it could be really valuable if we could discuss it in a spirit of mutual respect and open mindedness.

I take it as read that anyone on this forum is most likely to believe in plenary inspiration of the scriptures as originally given. If not, that might be a further thread, but it would be a distraction from this particular thread.

This topic has been well-aired on many a web-site but often in the spirit of a street corner harangue. If we could start with the presuppositions that all contributors are seeking truth, rather than victory, it could be of real value.

What do you think folks?

Re: Which is the best Bible Version? - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/8/22 9:33

O.K. I am interested, again under the "rules of engagement" you outlined. This is something that has sat in the back of my mind and am glad you brought it up. Since the only objective in my mind is "what did the writers *mean*, not what do I think it means" or better yet what was God telling us through these men.

Since not all of us are scholars or from higher education, I ask that you bear with us 'lay people'.

Maybe some basic outlines for starters.

For instance;

Scripture interprets scripture.

The bible was written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic.

Context, culture and audience at the time they were written.

The entire collection of books is about God's plan of redemption centered around one solitary figure, Jesus Christ. (Is that at a correct assumption?)

more?

Also, without the Holy Spirit we might as well be reading the phone book, how do we discern which versions have a particular 'bent' towards man's thinking? A Hebrew scholar without the Spirit of God dwelling inside of him might be able to tell me something about language but spiritually might as well be talking quantum physics.

I have a ton of questions, so I will most likely be asking as opposed to stating, an observer trying to get to the bottom line, which is truth. This is an important subject in light of the fact that there are many who would have us rewrite the scriptures to support their particular point of view and have done so. Translating from language to language is a difficult endeavor and will always fall short in the hands of fallible men. So how do we keep this in a right perspective without spinning off into arguments over words, taking scriptures out of their proper context (which I at times am guilty of) and keep in mind what you originally stated?;

Quote:

If we could start with the presuppositions that all contributors are seeking truth, rather than victory, it could be of real value.

I offer up this suggestion:

Pray before you post.

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Re:, on: 2003/8/22 10:48

This is a hard question to answer, mainly because it would partly involve subjective criteria rather than empirical objective data. Most on this board are likely aware of the KJV only defenders. I do not fall into that camp. I own about 20 versions of the Bible but consistently only use 3, the New King James, New American Standard, and the Darby. I guess I fall more into a "literalist" camp. However, I do recognize some problems with literal translations. Figures of speech can often times be better conveyed in versions that freely paraphrase. Or even cultural subtleties are lost in literal translations. Still for myself, since I have a good personal reference library, I prefer literal translations. My problem with paraphrase is that it brings in the translators own private interpretations many times. The "Living Bible" and "The Message" are probably the worst for this. I like as close to a word for word as possible and let the Spirit help.

Next would come as to which Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic texts are the least tainted and which translations are built on those texts? Byzantine? Alexandrian? Western? Caesarean? That's a whole subject that I think is too involved for the average Bible student and often times just brings in confusion.

Currently I use the NKJV for my regular Bible reading but most of my study is done using my Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible in the NASB.

Everyone has a preference and I think that you should use whatever translation you are comfortable with and that speaks to your heart. If it doesn't do that and reads like a textbook it might be best to consider a different translation. Just my 2 cents!

Kevin

For anyone wanting to read about comparative translations etc. perhaps I could recommend a site. I do not agree with every finding of theirs but it is a useful and informative website.

(<http://www.cob-net.org/compare.htm>) SEE HERE!!

Re: The x and y axes - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/22 10:51

In one sense the answer to the question is easy. The best Bible version is the one that you will read. If you had the Pentateuch in Moses' handwriting, and Galatians in Paul's they would be no benefit if they just sat on your shelf. Likewise if you had the purist Hebrew or Greek text they would be of no advantage unless we were fluent in those languages ourselves.

This first posting is going to be long one. Sorry.

Having said that, there are two major influences which affect all Bible translations. They are both vital so I won't say first.

The underlying text. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and a little Aramaic/Chaldean, and Koine Greek. Koine Greek distinguishes the Greek of the NT from modern Greek and more importantly from Classical Greek. None of the original 'autographs' (e.g. manuscripts in the handwriting of Paul) are known to exist. Every ancient Bible, no matter how ancient, is a copy.

There are hundreds of ancient copies of the NT. There are some which are very old, back to the 3rd and 4th centuries A D. (I was looking at 2 of these in the British Library just last month. Only through the glass of the display cabinet; I don't want anyone to think I am claiming to be very expert on these matters.) When scholars examine all these copies they find that although the vast proportion of each copy is exactly the same as other copies, there are some differences. They then discover that sometimes several copies have one word whereas several other copies have another word. They put the copies which have the same word into 'families'.

They then try to work out why the differences exist; this is called textual criticism. Criticism here just means 'judgement'. These same scholars then decide that some families are 'better' than the others. You may have seen versions of the Bible which have footnotes saying 'best mss (manuscripts) have ***'. This is where the problems begin, because different scholars have 'judged' that different 'families' are the 'best'.

The reason that the RSV is sometimes different from the KJV is that the translators of the KJV judged that one family of manuscripts was the better, and the translators of the RSV judged that another family was better. Consequently the KJV and RSV translators, on this small percentage of different words, are translating from different Greek texts. Hence the translations will be different at some points.

If you decided that there were 2 main families you could make this your x axis, with The Western Family on the left and the Majority Family on the right. Every Bible could then be plotted on your graph depending on which family you judged (best) most reliable. It's a lot more complicated than this but this graph would have the RSV over on the left and the KJV over on the right. (we can go more deeply into this later if folks want to)

So what is the y axis? The y axis is the translation philosophy of the translators. Some expert translators say we should translate one Greek word into one English word; this would be called Literal Equivalence. Other translators would say we should translate every Greek 'idea' into an English idea; this would be called Dynamic Equivalence. Your y axis could have dynamic equivalence at the bottom and literal equivalence at the top.

We can now plot every Bible translation on our xy graph, if you know which manuscript families they thought were best, and which translation philosophy they thought best.

That's enough for one posting, but here is a true story. Bible translators were translating the sayings of Jesus into a tribal language in Papua New Guinea (PNG). "if you had a son who asked for a fish would you give him a snake?" said the translator. "YES", said the listeners. "Whoa", said the translator, "how come?" PNG is very hilly, the streams run very quickly and the fish are very small and boney. Snake, on the other hand, is highly nutritious, so if your son asked for a fish you would certainly give him more than he asked for if you were able, so by all means give him a snake.

How would you have translated it?

Re:, on: 2003/8/22 11:05

Quote:
-----Bible translators were translating the sayings of Jesus into a tribal language in Papua New Guinea (PNG). "if you had a son who asked for a fish would you give him a snake?" said the translator. "YES", said the listeners. "Whoa", said the translator, "how come?" PNG is very hilly, the streams run very quickly and the fish are very small and boney. Snake, on the other hand, is highly nutritious, so if your son asked for a fish you would certainly give him more than he asked for if you were able, so by all means give him a snake.

Sorry Ron, but I would still have translated it literally. As someone became familiar with the Bible they would soon enough figure out why Christ used the symbol of the snake. Even paraphrasing it would still have been difficult to convey the meaning. Not to mention that even in English there were many things obscure to me when I first started reading the Bible but became more clear over the years.

Kevin

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/22 11:52

Hi Ktrek

I'm not telling you what I would have done, so you don't need to apologise. However, if you wanted a strictly literal translation it would have to read..

"which (untranslatable word) of you the father shall request the son bread (untranslatable word) will give to him if also a fish (untranslatable word) instead of a fish a serpent he will give to him."

I'm not sure what that would communicate.

Re:, on: 2003/8/22 11:57

Well, since I don't speak New Guinean I guess I'll just have to trust you that the words were indeed untranslatable. :-D

Kevin

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/22 12:09

Nor me, the Greek words are not translatable into English. It is a idiomatic form of contrast.

Here's another story. This time from South America. Again Bible translators were beginning with some simple stories and sayings of Jesus.

They wanted to use the phrase "I am the living bread". There were no edible grains in the rain forest so they began a working translation by referring to manioc, which was the staple diet of the tribe. The problem was that the tribe only distinguished between living and cooked. (Their only interest was food, so living had got away but the dead things were cooked.) Their opposite to 'living' was 'cooked'

The problem is that uncooked manioc root is highly poisonous.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/8/23 9:37

Quote:

-----That's enough for one posting, but here is a true story. Bible translators were translating the sayings of Jesus into a tribal language in Papua New Guinea (PNG). "if you had a son who asked for a fish would you give him a snake?" said the translator. "YES", said the listeners. "Whoa", said the translator, "how come?" PNG is very hilly, the streams run very quickly and the fish are very small and boney. Snake, on the other hand, is highly nutritious, so if your son asked for a fish you would certainly give him more than he asked for if you were able, so by all means give him a snake

How would you have translated it?

If you had the foreknowledge of their culture, I don't see any reason why you could not just reverse the order to; "if you had a son who asked for a snake would you give him a fish?" So that it would make sense to them. Then you could explain that in the 'original' the opposite is true and was written as such because of the culture and audience it was given to.

Meaning. Is not that what should be considered the highest value in translating? I realize this is not always easy to do as you have well stated.

Another example. 1 Cor 11:14 "Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?" My particular version (NKJV MaCarthur Study Bible) gives a vague explanation, are we talking a matter of 'degrees'? What constitutes 'long'? I am assuming the culture of the people Paul was addressing would have understood his *meaning*, what about those who have taken a Nazirite vow? I just so happen to fall into this camp, since I have shoulder length hair, so am I now 'dishonored'? Or if I followed all the prescriptions of a Nazirite vow, would I skirt the issue? Or am I confusing the issue by these examples? (It's not something I have any anxiety over) :-)

Surely there are those who like to use a pretext as a proof text. But do we do a disservice by holding to the use of words 'as written' even if the meaning is lost on the hearers because of their particular culture?

Your thoughts are appreciated, since you guys seem to have a better grasp of all this.

P.S. No, I am not getting a hair cut! :-D

Re: Which is the best Bible Version? - posted by Jason, on: 2003/8/23 14:26

I've been working some on an article this summer (several parts to it) that hopes to address this question. When I finish it, I will post the link.

Suffice it to say that it is impossible to answer the question of "Which Bible is Best?"; better questions would be "Which Bible is the most accurate?" or "Which Bible is the clearest?"

Re: Now let me take the other side - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/23 14:56

Your suggestion to reverse the order would not have anything like the same impact. A fish might be a disappointment but it wouldn't put you in deadly peril. It links with the idea of 'you being evil, know how to give good gifts'. Even an evil father would not give an evil gift. So we can't just switch labels for culture's sake.

The supporters of dynamic equivalence would use these kinds of illustrations to make their point, but it's time for me to take the other side. This is from *The English Bible & its Origins* Richard Purkis Angel Press 1988 isbn 0 947785 23 X page 56. Purkis supports Dynamic Equivalence.

Here is an example of Dynamic Equivalence at work..

(start of quotation)
Dynamic Equivalence

Modern translators of the Bible have worked out a very simple (but certainly not easy) method called Dynamic Equivalence. It works like this:

1. Original word/phrase (Greek/Hebrew)
2. All the ideas which this contains
3. Those ideas translated into the other language
4. The best word or phrase to convey the main idea of the original

Let's take the example with which we opened the chapter

1. Original Words (Greek, Luke 18:13)
etypten (he beat)
eis (on) sic
to stethos (the breast)
autou (of himself)
2. Ideas behind those words
 - a. he was sorry for what he had done.
 - b. he showed that sorrow in an action
 - c. he hit himself to prove that he wanted to punish and change himself
 - d. he hit himself over his heart (which throughout the Bible represents the understanding).
3. These ideas are then transferred into the Chokwe language. (West Zambia Language)
4. The best natural equivalent in Chokwe becomes
"he beat his brows" (to show a change of mind and thinking). (end of quotation)

Can you see that in this instance Dynamic Equivalence has lost all links to sorrow and repentance? I suggest you act if out.. Do it the first time beating your chest and the second time beating your forehead. Can you feel the difference? The first is a broken hearted penitent, the second is a first century equivalent of Homer Simpson 'doh'.

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Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/8/23 20:35

Quote:

Your suggestion to reverse the order would not have anything like the same impact. A fish might be a disappointment but it wouldn't put you in deadly peril. It links with the idea of 'you being evil, know how to give good gifts'. Even an evil father would not give an evil gift. So we can't just switch labels for culture' sake.

Maybe I lost something here in translation (pun intended). Since the snake is highly nutritious, and would be a preference over a small, bony fish...

I get your point (I didn't think about the peril comparison, I have to quit posting these things before I am fully awake!) Hmmm...do they have Pirania's in PNG? Would that make more sense? Or how about a dead snake? Or neither, what about two completely different animals to convey the meaning?

I agree with what you stated in regards to Dynamic Equivalence, it leaves out the true *meaning*. Which is what I am puzzled over, surely in different cultures there must be a way to convey the intent/meaning....without it becoming...man's interpretation :roll: How do I state this?...

It seems as though the best way would be for the translator as well as the 'native'(for lack of a better word), to be schooled in each others language to be able to come to an understanding of how best to convey the thoughts intended. Surely this isn't anything new. I know some of the arguments over just what we have in English, the NLT and The Message, as stated earlier, for example.

Difficult, I feel I am in over my head already, just keep in mind that you are dealing with someone who doesn't have his full inventory of functioning brain cells in operation...kind of a long story :-D

Don't want to keep going over this one point...if it's getting redundant
_/_crsschk_

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/24 3:40

Quote:
-----It seems as though the best way would be for the translator as well as the 'native'(for lack of a better word), to be schooled in each others language to be able to come to an understanding of how best to convey the thoughts intended.

This is what folks such as the Wycliffe Bible Translators have always endeavoured to do. I have friend who was a translator working in a small tribal group in Brazil. The process is long and painful. They arrived with not a single word of the tribal language. They started by displaying an item never before seen in that area. The people asked, in their own language, 'what is it?' The translators then memorised this phrase so that they could point to any item in camp and say 'what is it?'. They quickly built a vocab of nouns. Then they began writing on paper and the people asked 'what are you doing?' By learning this phrase the translators could build a vocab of verbs by asking 'What are you doing?'

This is all very labour intensive and it takes a long time before you can translate "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son....". Have you every thought how many concepts there are in that verse? Some groups have no word for 'God, love, or world. and a son belongs to the whole tribe'.

Now what does such a translator do? Wait until they can create statements of soaring concept and beauty in a tribal language, or try to make a start from where they are?

And for 'tribal groups' think of the increasing post-modern world of New York or London. Where do WE start?

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2003/8/24 3:58

Quote:
-----Don't want to keep going over this one point...if it's getting redundant

I don't think it is quite redundant yet. I have been deliberately provocative in these posts to provoke some thought.

In order for communication to take place the communicator has to have something in 'common' (this is where the word comes from) with the hearer. There is a lovely story about an Irishman who was asked the way to Dublin. "If I were you" he said "I wouldn't start from here". Any preacher will know exactly what he meant. You get what seems like a simple question but you can't start from the point the questioner has chosen. Then they say why can't you give a simple answer to a simple question? Because you haven't asked me a simple question!!

The Word became flesh; it was the only way He could adequately communicate with us. He embraced much human weakness (not sin), he became thirsty and tired. The amazing thing is that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Human beings were made in the image and likeness of God, and once a new 'virgin' beginning could be achieved there was the possibility of God and man in one person becoming the means of full communication (or communion if you prefer).

But the level of His communication was limited by the hearing ability of those to whom He spoke "I have many things to say unto you, but you are not able to bear them yet." It still is. Remember Paul's comment to the Corinthians? He didn't say "I won't talk to you until you can eat meat"!

For the communicator the question becomes "Do I begin to communicate even though I know I can't say everything I want to, or do I wait, saying nothing, until I can say everything?"

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/8/24 8:19

This is a great topic. Our church also supports a couple who are doing work through Wycliffe and up till now I had not given it much thought, you have prompted me to think and to pray for these who are giving themselves to this challenging work.

Quote:
-----Now what does such a translator do? Wait until they can create statements of soaring concept and beauty in a tribal language, or try to make a start from where they are?

Indeed. I guess in a sense you have to start with the language that transcends speech, love. "By this all will know that you are My disciples"

Quote:

And for 'tribal groups' think of the increasing post-modern world of New York or London. Where do WE start?

Yes, I have been asking that same question. I live in a small apartment complex (11 units) and currently we have a devout Muslim (saw him passing out material on Islam at the mall yesterday), a Hindu couple and also a leader with the Jehovah's witness. I've got some work to do.

Re: - posted by crsschk (), on: 2003/8/24 9:15

Quote:
-----I don't think it is quite redundant yet. I have been deliberately provocative in these posts to provoke some thought.

Check!

Quote:

The Word became flesh; it was the only way He could adequately communicate with us.

In a way we must do the same, to be able to cross the language barrier.
Brings to mind Paul "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

Quote:

-----For the communicator the question becomes "Do I begin to communicate even though I know I can't say everything I want to, or do I wait, saying nothing, until I can say everything?"

Certainly we can not wait, for myself I can only cry, guilty! Used to be of the mindset that I needed to get all 'my doctrinal ducks in a row'**then** I could start...but I soon realized that all my ducks were scattered anyway ;-) and it was just something to hide behind.

Back to the issue at hand. Translation. This topic surely has some broad implications which we have only begun to touch on, and you have brought up some very good questions. To reiterate, we should be lifting those who do this work in other cultures in prayer and support, I am sure they could use it!

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2004/2/27 8:07

Hi All
Mark (Nasher) has begun a thread on the TNIV. Here is a reminder of an earlier one which began but went into hibernation. One or two points raised here may be worth considering in the light of translations generally.

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/3/1 14:18

"Which is the best translation?"

Depends what we mean by "best", and what our primary purpose for using it is.

The English-speaking world is blessed because it has many good translations. Comparing them can really open up our eyes to the nuances of the original text.

I wish the Chinese Bible has as many options...

Re: Per-versions or versions... inspired or nearly inspired? How close is close enough? - posted by hijode1dios (), on:

Personally, I look for a translation that conveys accuracy in translating the Greek and Hebrew; not just word for word, but idea for idea.

It becomes clearer when comparing translations such as the NIV to the KJV. For example, Mark 10:21 leaves out "take up the cross" in the NIV. Fasting and fornication are left out of different verses. Then you have obvious confusion in places like Isaiah 14:12 where KJV calls Lucifer the son of the morning, but the NIV calls him "Morning Star." When you turn to Revelation 22:16 you see that Jesus is the Morning Star. Well, obviously Satan said he would make himself equal with God, and he apparently has done so in some versions.

I teach public elementary school and Bible College. When I am grading papers, I don't compare papers to papers to see how someone else answered a question. I go to the source text and compare the student's answer with the original source text. The score depends on how far the student strayed from the text.

Amazingly though, many Bible teachers, like Beth Moore (who is very good and thorough) will list the way a verse is translated in several versions, as if all the different versions bring out different nuances of the original and the sum total of the versions added together should equal the truth. I can't buy that concept. It works for some people I guess. I do like Beth Moore's work though. She is accurate as far as her material goes. I can't say that for some very popular people I have read.

Charles Swindoll is a great preacher, but after reading his book about Elijah and enjoying it thoroughly, I bought his bio of Paul. I have been studying the life of Paul in depth for a year and read many authors and built a 50 foot timeline in my garage of the details in Scripture of his life. So when I read Swindoll's account, I realized he was just hurrying to add one more face to his list of Profiles in Character from the series. There are many blatant errors in his work. Check p.195 first paragraph where he speaks of Paul's shipwreck being in chapter 20 of Acts. It's actually in chapter 27. There are several more. Swindoll does a great job of applying the story to our lives in a devotional manner, but he doesn't place an emphasis on accuracy or even on Scriptural consistency. He compensates for his failure to study the life of Paul in depth by accepting the presented story of a few scanty sources. He would have done a better job if he had put away the books and consulted the Bible account. I can see he read some of Robert Reymond's account of Paul Missionary Theologian, because he gives an illustration about "gutter snipe" on page 206 that Reymond used. I didn't like the way he resorted to name calling, such as "eggheads" in the penultimate paragraph of page 209. But, he did give expanded info (p. 210) about Paul's statement in Acts 17:27-28 which I had not seen explained elsewhere. He quoted a source of Aratus of Soli (third c

entury B.C.) who wrote

"Zeus fills the streets, the marts,
Zeus fills the seas, the shrines or the shores, and the rivers!
Everywhere our need is Zeus!
We also are his offspring."

Swindoll explained what others only stated, that it referred to Greek poets. But, he shows that it is Zeus specifically. Basically, I value the accuracy of the King James version. I would not be willing to sacrifice content for modern clarity. I prefer to go to the original sources and study for myself. I realize we do lose some things in any translation. So why continue to progress away from the original. I want to get as close as I can get to the actual words and thoughts expressed in Scripture.

I am sure many people have different opinions. I own several translations of the Bible in different languages, including a copy of the Textus Receptus Greek, put out by the Trinitarian Bible Society. But, I couldn't get my hands on an actual Masoretic text of the Hebrew. I had to "settle" for a Jewish Pub. Society copy of the TaNaKh, which is based on the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHT.) In the preface and notes they refer to the text evolving, and explain how they "scientifically engineered" the BHT. They speak of the translation into English being an "unbroken chain of uncertainty," which they were obligated to correct. Actually the CBD catalog listed it as a Masoretic text, but upon opening the package and reading the preface, I realized it had been misrepresented accidentally. (Not the catalog distributors error.) CBD did offer a refund, but I didn't want a refund. I kept it because I didn't have an alternative text.

Bible translation is very crucial in our time.

Psalm 147:15 says:
"He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly."

I pray the Word continues to run in this age.

Re: - posted by Delboy (), on: 2004/3/17 17:07

Quote:
-----will list the way a verse is translated in several versions, as if all the different versions bring out different nuances of the original and the sum total of the versions added together should equal the truth. I can't buy that concept.

Hi hijode1dios, this is a really interesting comment which I've often wondered about would you expound more? I'm all ears!

Re: Fly! - posted by hijode1dios (), on: 2004/3/18 1:15

Hi Delboy,
When you saw the subject line, what did you first think I meant with the word fly? You could have thought of many different meanings. Here are a few I can think of:

1. To float in the air, as in a plane.
2. A zipper on a man's pants.
3. The kids at school use the word to mean something is cool, like "Ms. Mitchell is a really fly teacher!" (And, my science experiments are "tight.")
4. Stores can be "fly by night"
5. Ideas and plans may not fly.
6. A fly can buzz in your face and land in your soup.

Suppose I wrote you a message that said:

Our plans to have the fly fly through the fly by night diner did not fly, because the fly landed in a bowl of soup.

You could translate that message into Spanish. But, each time you translated the word fly, you would have to determine

which meaning I meant for fly in that instance. There is only one correct translation for the above sentence.

If you open a Greek lexicon and find the word "doxa" you see a wide range of meanings. The many choices fill three columns in Thayers Lexicon. Some people get the idea from that that any or all of those definitions will work when doxa is used in a verse. Actually, there is one specific use meant in most situations. If I substitute any of those choices into a verse that uses glory, I could change the meaning of the context of the passage. In English we have many words that have more than one meaning. But, when we use them, we always have a specific meaning in mind and it is a given that both the speaker and the listener know which meaning we are using in each instance. I'm sure you translated my fly sentence above correctly. Am I right? Actually, I'm sure you understood the sentence precisely as I meant it.

Unfortunately, most modern translations choose different words, and some people get the idea that both ways the word has been translated are correct parts of the meaning in that instance.

That would be like translating my fly sentence as:

Our plans to have the sailing cool through the bug by night diner did not here to day and gone tomorrow, because the zipper landed in a bowl of soup.

You know...I love the Words of God! Every one of them!

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/3/18 9:53

Hi hijode1dios,

A few reflections on the underlying assumptions that you seemed to hold.

Quote:
-----Personally, I look for a translation that conveys accuracy in translating the Greek and Hebrew; not just word for word, but idea for idea.

It becomes clearer when comparing translations such as the NIV to the KJV. For example, Mark 10:21 leaves out "take up the cross" in the NIV. Fastidious and fornication are left out of different verses. Then you have obvious confusion in places like Isaiah 14:12 where KJV calls Lucifer the son of the morning, but the NIV calls him "Morning Star." When you turn to Revelation 22:16 you see that Jesus is the Morning Star. Well, obviously Satan said he would make himself equal with God, and he apparently has done so in some versions.

(1) In the foregoing discussion, you have apparently *already* decided that the Textus Receptus is the best Greek manuscript; that's why the KJV emerges as the better translation. Many scholars would disagree with this assessment. (See for example: (<http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/kjv.htm>) Why I Do Not Think the King James Bible is Not the Best Translation Available Today, by NT Greek scholar Daniel Wallace).

(2) Isaiah 14:23 - the Hebrew text "Helel son of Shachar" can refer to a name for the morning star (Venus) or the crescent moon (HALOT 235). By the way, some scholars think that seeing this passage as an allusion to Satan is probably contextually unwarranted (J. Martin, BKCOT 1061).

(3) You mentioned Revelation 22. You surely know the story of how Erasmus came up with this part of the Textus Receptus? For instance, referring to Rev. 22:19 -

"The Textus Receptus, on which the KJV rests, reads 'the book' of life instead of 'the tree' of life. When the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus translated the NT he had access to no Greek mss for the last six verses of Revelation. So he translated the Latin Vulgate back into Greek at this point. As a result he created seventeen textual variants which were not in any Greek mss. The most notorious of these is this reading. It is thus decidedly inauthentic, while 'the tree' of life, found in the best and virtually all Greek mss, is clearly authentic. The confusion was most likely due to an intra-Latin switch: The form of the word for 'tree' in Latin in this passage is ligno; the word for 'book' is libro. The two-letter difference accounts for an accidental alteration in some Latin mss; that 'book of life' as well as 'tree of life' is a common expression in the Apocalypse probably accounts for why this was not noticed by Erasmus or the KJV translator s. (This textual problem is not discussed in NA27.)"

Quote:
-----I teach public elementary school and Bible College. When I am grading papers, I don't compare papers to papers to see how some one else answered a question. I go to the source text and compare the student's answer with the original source text. The score depends on how far the student strayed from the text.

Amazingly though, many Bible teachers, like Beth Moore (who is very good and thorough) will list the way a verse is translated in several versions, as if

all the different versions bring out different nuances of the original and the sum total of the versions added together should equal the truth. I can't buy that concept.

(4) I think consulting different translations still has value because the translation from one language to another does not consist of a *one-to-one correspondence*. Any bilingual person will know that this is impossible. The nuances in the Greek word are not necessarily the same as that in the English translation. By consulting different versions, we can see the choices made by the translators. However, as you have illustrated in a later post, we must not assume that all different translations can be synthesised together. Obviously, where translations are significantly different, we must maintain that the original author could have intended only one meaning. Our task then, is to decide which translation did the best job of conveying the authorial intent (intense study and effort is obviously required to do this properly).

Re:Underlying Assumptions... - posted by hijode1dios (), on: 2004/3/18 12:35

You are correct to note my appreciation of the Textus Receptus, as well as the Massoretic text, as explained in my earlier post.

I would be interested in seeing the source of your quote about Erasmus. He was an amazing man. I can't accurately comment on the quote since I don't know the source. I know many would like to discredit his work now, just as they did in his lifetime.

Of course, I'm sure you weren't making an assumption that the "story" is true, just because one source stated it. If we believed every statement we read as truth, we would have a difficult time with opposing sources. And many stories exist about how people were killed for offering opposing views.

If you noticed my quote from the preface of the JPS TaNaKh, the BHT claims to be "scientifically engineered." That is a fact they present as a positive. As I stated, I don't believe the TR or Massoretic texts were flawed, in error, or in need of scientific engineering. That then explains my preference for the TR.

Actually, Paul told Timothy:

(2 Timothy 3:16 KJV) "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

I believe if the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and intended to be passed down to us, then the God who inspired it is capable and willing to preserve it in content and translation. I can't believe the Word of God is flawed. Jesus said he is perfect. Then, either His word is perfect, or its not His word.

God's word is magnified above His name:

(Psalms 138:2 KJV) "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

And a beautiful saving name it is!

But His word is like fire in our bones, just as His name is a fire on our lips.

I love the man and His Words.

As you can see, I am not a Bible "Critic." I have no special love for textual criticism. I think it would have been odd for God to show Ezekiel the scroll and say, "Here is my manuscript, Zeke. Tell me what you think of it." No Ezekiel didn't critique the text. He ate the scroll. I believe in the purity of the text. I eat every word. Admittedly, sometimes I get choked up during teaching and preaching on hard to swallow admonitions. :-)

EzeÂ 2:9

"And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;"

EzeÂ 2:10

"And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe."

Ezekiel 3:1-3 "Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."

I can see you have tasted the Word as well.

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/3/18 16:57

Re: Erasmus

I affirm that Erasmus was a great scholar. I have seen the story in multiple sources, and they seemed reliable to me (one is a text book on biblical interpretation by Klein et al, the other from the footnote of the NET Bible by Daniel Wallace et al). Obviously, by "sources," I do not mean I have investigated into the original historical material. But I believe in its validity because these secondary sources are reputable.

Nevertheless, note that this incident regarding Erasmus applied only to the last six verses of Revelation. We should not reject the whole manuscript based on the alleged problem with six verses. I cited the incident merely because I thought it is interesting.

I would differ from you regarding "scientific engineered" texts. The Textus Receptus, with all its greatness, is not perfect and free from scribal errors (the same applies to all other manuscripts). Nevertheless, I am amazed by God's miraculous preservation of the text -- the manuscripts testify to the fact that despite minor variants, the message of the Word of God is well preserved and is trustworthy. I share with you the conviction of the inspiration of the scriptures and a high view of the authority of Scripture (although we might differ slightly at points).

The word "criticism" actually came from a German word (forgot the actual word), but I think it's better translated as "analysis", because the word "critic" seems so negative. I think textual criticism is a valuable discipline that God had used to bring us a manuscript closer to the original.

I have a passion for *enjoying* God's Word too. Without the devotional dimension, scholarship is useless. However, I do not therefore dismiss the value of biblical scholarship and textual criticism. (In fact, in your post "Fly!" you were already unconsciously applying principles used in textual criticism!)

Daniel Wallace's article cited in my previous post is quite good. I urge you to read it. He teaches at Dallas Theological Seminary and he wrote a textbook on Greek grammar too, I believe.

Let me add that the spiritual conditions of the believers are not directly correlated to the scripture version they use. (If only Christians would just *read* their Bibles today! In China, biblical resources are so limited, yet the Christians genuinely immerse themselves into the Word of God.)

"The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever."

Re: Dallas Theological Seminary - posted by hijode1dios (), on: 2004/3/19 0:05

Dallas Theological Seminary.... now there's a point we can agree on. Paul Enns who wrote The Moody Handbook of Theology, graduated from there. His teacher, J. Dwight Pentecost who wrote Things To Come, and Pentecost's teacher (and President) John F. Walvoord who wrote Every Prophecy of the Bible. Some of the best of modern Bible scholarship.

My favorite of the three is Pentecost's Things To Come. I think his treatment of the Battle of Megiddo is very thorough and vivid.

Though I haven't heard of Daniel Wallace, I have Ray Summer's Essentials of NT Greek, Hadjiantoniou's Basic Grammar of NT Greek, and Bill Mounce's Basics of Biblical Greek. The first two are very well recommended. Zodhiates recommends the second. But, of course Bill Mounce has a very good teaching style. He is a teacher. He uses a more wholistic syntactic approach to teaching Greek, where Summers uses the analytic method. Both have their advantages. Summer's charts and factual presentation is great for memorizing parsing rules. But, Mounce helps you see the big picture. I have yet to find a good reason to recommend Hadjiantoniou, though it is ok.

I remember high school Geometry seemed so difficult at first, when we were just memorizing axioms. They didn't seem to make sense or have a purpose. But, then after I had learned them by heart, suddenly it all fit together and the problems were easy. It takes memorization of the facts before comprehension kicks in sometimes.

Mounce also included a BBG CD Rom with practice vocabulary and parsing drills. Now that makes a big difference. I have the Greek Tutor software, too. You know it's so much easier with good software and audio CDs.

But, what helps the most is just taking a plain (TR) Greek NT to church with me and reading along in the Greek while I hear the English. My Greek NT is made of Calfskin leather (that calf idea :-)) bothered my 12 year old son, though) and it has such a neat look to it. Do you ever imagine what it must have been like for Paul writing and thinking in Greek. It is so much more real in the original language to me. It seems like the barriers of time and language are moved away and I am there in Paul's Bible world.

It's hard to imagine what life must have been like for Job, who had no Bible.

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2004/3/19 0:24

Quote:

-----J. Dwight Pentecost

I just got 3 audio tapes by this fellow, I will be getting them up as soon as possible. In relation to the discussion about the biblical manuscript I am in favour of the Erasmus manuscripts, and I do enjoy much of the way the KJV Bible is translated. I usually am reading the NIV version these days though :-P Some of the newer translations coming out are quite scary even though they are boasting that they have access to many more manuscripts than prior versions had. I just feel the devotion, times, and spirit behind the KJV translation is much different than in our days. I am not attacking the qualifications of the translators in our newer translations, but I would like to say that spirituality and faith in God is not as potent and full as it was in the days past. The mentality of our day is we know it all and can do it all without God, we just do things for God.

Re: - posted by Agent001 (), on: 2004/3/20 17:34

Hi hijode1dios,

I fully agree that ultimately competency in reading scriptures in the original languages is the best way of getting at the intended meaning of the texts.

Yes, Dallas Theological Seminary is a good one and probably the last one of a dispensational persuasion (Well, I'm not a dispensationalist but I like to follow the dispensational scholars as a reference).

I stumbled across Daniel Wallace's works at (<http://www.bible.org>) <http://www.bible.org>; the "Prof's Soap Box" is one of my favourite sections. The (<http://www.netbible.com>) NET Bible (New English Translation) is also associated to him, which has much helpful textual notes on the original languages.