

# **Translation**

**The Making of the Language  
Versions of the Biblical Writings**

# Some Great Biblical Verses

• `rs")x.a, al{å y[i<sup>a</sup>ro÷ hw"ihy>

ou[twj ga.r hvga,phsen o` qeo.j to.n  
ko,smon( w[ste to.n ui`o.n to.n  
monogenh/ e;dwken( i[na pa/j o`  
pisteu,wn eivj auvto.n mh.  
avpo,lhtai avllV e;ch| zwh.n  
aivw,nionÅ

# Some Great Biblical Verses

YHWH is my shepherd, I shall not want.

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

Psalm 23:1

# Some Great Biblical Verses

ou[twj ga.r hvga,phsen o` qeo.j to.n  
ko,smon( w[ste to.n ui`o.n to.n  
monogenh/ e;dwken( i[na pa/j o`  
pisteu,wn eivj auvto.n mh.  
avpo,lhtai avllV e;ch| zwh.n  
aivw,nionA

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

# The Biblical Languages

- Hebrew – almost the entire Old Testament
- Aramaic – portions of Daniel and Ezra
- Greek – the entire New Testament

# Key Questions

- How did Bible translation begin?
- How does Bible translation work?
- Can I trust my English translations?
- Which translations should I use?

# **A Brief History of Bible Translation**

# Some Early Bible Translations

- The Septuagint (LXX)
- Aramaic targums
- Syriac, including the Peshitta
- Coptic
- Latin, including the Vulgate



# A Major Change for the Worse

- Changes produced by Latin and Islam
- In the East missions began to cease, while in the West Latin became the only allowed version
- A few translations were made (Wycliffe) but these were generally opposed by the Church
- Greek and Hebrew were virtually lost to the Church in the West

# **The Rebirth of Bible Translation**

- Constantinoople and the Renaissance
- The printing press
- The Reformation and Bible translation

# **The Modern Explosion in Bible Translation**

- Luther and the Reformation
- Wycliffe Bible Translators and current Bible translation agencies

# **How Bible Translation Works**

# Important Steps In Translation

- Which books will be translated? (Canonization)
- Which manuscripts will be consulted? (Textual criticism)
- What theory of translation will be followed?

# **Which Books Will be Translated?**

# Which Books Will Be Translated?

- Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox versions will contain the Deutero-canonical books
- Protestant versions will usually not include the Deutero-canonical books
- Some Protestant versions have included the Deutero-canonical books separately (KJV, RSV)

**Which Manuscripts  
Will be Consulted?**



# **Which Manuscripts will be consulted?**

- Virtually all modern translations base the OT primarily on the Masoretic text
- Virtually all modern translations consult other ancient versions (LXX, Samaritan Pentateuch, etc) and will occasionally follow them against the Masoretic Text

# **Which Manuscripts will be consulted?**

- Most modern translations use an eclectic NT text, choosing the manuscripts that seem best to the translators
- In general, most modern translations give priority to the Alexandrian text over the Byzantine/Majority text

# **Which Manuscripts will be consulted?**

- The key exception to this rule is the New King James Version which gives priority to the Majority text
- Most modern translations will footnote any major differences between the manuscripts

**Which Translation  
Theory Will Be Used?**

# Major Translation Theories

- Essentially literal
- Dynamic equivalence
- Paraphrase

# Essentially Literal Translations

An essentially literal translation translates the meaning of every word in the original language, understood correctly in context, into its nearest English equivalent, and attempts to express the result with ordinary English word order and style, as far as that is possible without distorting the meaning of the original...The main point is that essentially literal translations attempt to represent the meaning of every word in the original in some way or other in the resulting translation.

# **Some Essentially Literal Translations**

- King James Version
- New King James Version
- Revised Standard Version
- New Revised Standard Version
- New American Standard Bible
- English Standard Version

# **Advantages of Essentially Literal Translation**

- Keeps full meaning of text – even secondary nuances
- More consistent translations of Greek and Hebrew words – more helpful for word studies



# **Disadvantages of Essentially Literal Translation**

- More difficult to read – in many versions the English is not as smooth, and unfamiliar words and metaphors are often used
- Misunderstanding can occur if people do not understand the words and metaphors being used

# **Dynamic Equivalence Translation**

A dynamic-equivalence translation can also be called a thought-for-thought translation...In making a thought-for-thought translation, the translators must do their best to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and to present the same ideas, connotations, and effects in the receptor language.

From the Introduction to the New Living Translation.

# **Dynamic Equivalence Translation**

Dynamic equivalence translations do not attempt to translate every word, but rather give the meaning of every thought (though most words will be translated).

# **Some Dynamic Equivalence Translations**

- New International Version
- Today's New International Version
- New Living Translation (but not the Living Bible)
- Contemporary English Version
- Good News Bible

# **Advantages of Dynamic Equivalence Translation**

- The translations produced by this method are easier to read and understand, and generally are written in smoother English
- These translations make it easy to understand the central meaning of a verse

# **Disadvantages of Dynamic Equivalence Translation**

- Nuances and secondary meanings of the verse are often lost, especially when comparing with other verses having the same underlying words or phrases in the original languages
- This method requires more interpretation by the translator than an essentially literal translation

## **Paraphrase or Free Translation**

A paraphrase or free translation is a loose rendering, usually from the same language, which intends to convey the meaning of the original document in an easier to understand version

# **Paraphrase or Free Translation**

Paraphrases or free translations are most concerned with a fresh way to express the meaning of the passage, and are generally not concerned to translate each underlying word or even phrase from the original language



# **Some Paraphrases/ Free Translations**

- Living Bible
- The Message

# **Advantages of Paraphrase or Free Translation**

- Translations produced by this method will usually be very original and may cause the reader to take more notice of the passage

# **Disadvantages of Paraphrase or Free Translation**

- These translations are highly interpretive
- These translations have no concern for translating each underlying word or phrase and so are not good for study purposes

# Comparison of Bible Translations

2 Corinthians 5:14

NASB - For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

NIV - For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

NLT - Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life.

Message - Christ's love has moved me to such extremes. His love has the first and last word in everything we do.

Our firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat.

# Comparison of Bible Translations

1 Corinthians 7:27

- NASB - Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife.
- NIV - Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife.
- NLT - If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married.
- Message - Are you married? Stay married. Are you unmarried? Don't get married.

# **How To Choose and Effectively Use Bible Translations Today**

# Some Introductory Comments

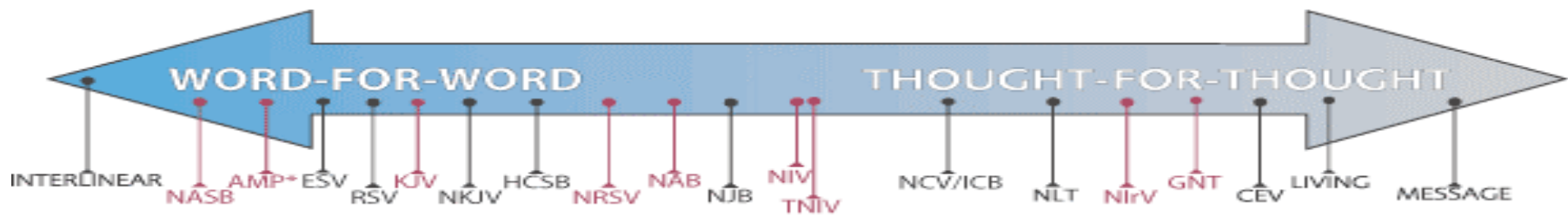
- There is no such thing as a perfect translation – language is simply too complex
- Due to the fact that languages change, all translations will have to be updated over time

# Some Introductory Comments

- All translations involve some amount of interpretation by the translator, although there is much less of this in essentially literal translations
- No translation is perfectly “word for word”, nor is any translation perfectly “thought for thought” or a complete free rendering. All exist on a spectrum.



# The Continuum of Bible Translations



# Choosing the Right Translations

- If you can not read Greek and Hebrew, you should use several different English translations
- You should choose translations which use different translation methods. Note the graphic below, and choose translations from different parts of the continuum.

# Comparison Chart for Bible Translations



# Choosing the Right Translations

- Your main Bible should be one of the translations on the left half of the graphic. I would not recommend anything less essentially literal than the NIV for your regular Bible.

# Choosing the Right Translations

- You should have at least one translation that is based on a different set of manuscripts (if your main Bible is the NIV, have either the King James or New King James as well), or at the minimum pay careful attention to the translation notes given in the margins/footnotes.

# Choosing the Right Translations

- Use or consult essentially literal translations for serious study
- It is helpful to sometimes use a paraphrase to “shock” you into paying attention to the passage.

# Getting the Most out of Your Bible

- Read the introduction – most of them are quite informative on how the translation was created – which manuscripts were used, what translation theory was followed, how footnotes/marginal notes work in the Bible, how the Divine Name YHWH is printed, etc.

# Getting the Most out of Your Bible

- Although you will have one version that is your favorite, use several versions in your study, and occasionally use a different version for reading. This will ensure that you are not missing anything and will help you to see the Scripture more accurately.



# Getting the Most out of Your Bible

- Use good Bible helps – commentaries, introductions, Bible encyclopedias, Bible dictionaries, etc.
- Read and study the Scripture prayerfully, and with your whole heart AND mind. God deserves no less!

