Principles and Practices
Of Bible Translation:
An Expanded Study Guide
For Translators
2013

John F. Brug

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 illustrate the types of issues which a translation committee would have to resolve if we were to make our own Bible translation or revise an existing translation. These principles can also help us in evaluating existing Bible translations though that is not the primary purpose of this paper.

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 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 produce and evaluate 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). These two translations represent moderate versions of the so-called "dynamic equivalent" and "formal equivalent" branches of the translation family. These will be compared with a number of other translations in a variety of styles. [1]

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] In this edition of the study guide I have added more frequent references to Holman (HCSB) since it is another candidate WELS is considering.

This expanded study guide is based on a paper first delivered at a conference of the Michigan District in Monroe, Michigan on January 16, 2012. It contains more examples for study than the shorter presentation edition entitled: "Principles and Practices of Bible Translation: Presentation". It is not intended to be a polished product, but a study guide which suggests passages and topics for individuals or study groups who want to explore translation issues more fully. In many cases it does not offer conclusions about a passage, but provides data for the group to discuss to reach their own conclusion. It is the sort of document which a translation committee would have to work through in making their preparations to undertake a translation or revision. If a translation committee worked through and produced a translation of the passages discussed in the paper, it would have a foundation for its principles of translation. Both versions of the paper are available in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary online essay file.

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. [2]

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 acceptable? 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 "acceptable" 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 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 most 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

---

[2] 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.

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).[3] 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 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. We would like every translation to 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[4] 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."

---

[3] 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.

[4] 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."

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.
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. Sometimes there is no clear solution in sight as to how to translate the text, and the translator simply has to take his best shot and move on.
19. 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. A translation/revision committee would very likely develop additional principles as they worked on the initial stages of their translation. We will now illustrate the principles with examples.

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 (1 Corinthians 10:16).

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

HCSB 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? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for all of us share that one bread.

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 (MSG)   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.

Rate the translations "communion," "participation," and "fellowship."[5] Which translations above falsify the doctrine of the Lord's Supper?

Whatever evaluation we may place on individual renderings by Luther in which he departs from a strictly literal rendering of the original, the purpose and effect of Luther's non-literal renderings are the opposite of those 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

---

5 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.) See also D. Kuske, WLQ, Fall 2004, p 284-286.

skill, hard work, understanding and intelligence is needed for a good translation. They know it less than even the miller's donkey for they have never tried it.[6]

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.[7]

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. It has happened that I have sometimes searched and inquired about a single word for three or four weeks. Sometimes I have not found it even then. I have worked Meister Philip and Aurogallus so hard in translating Job, sometimes barely translating three lines after four days. Now that it has been translated into German and completed, all can read and criticize it. One can now read three or four pages without stumbling one time—without realizing just what rocks and hindrances had once been where now one travels as if over a smoothly-cut plank. We had to sweat and toil there before we removed those rocks and hindrances, so one could go along nicely. The plowing goes nicely in a clear field. But nobody wants the task of digging out the rocks and hindrances. …

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.[8]

---

6 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 were their own.

7 *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

8 *Open Letter on Translation,* p 194.

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. [9]

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.
CEV   God the Father has given him the right to do so.
HCSB God the Father has set His seal of approval on Him."
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.

Evaluate each translation. Do the paraphrases say too little or too much?

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 that 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. [10]

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

---

[9] *Open Letter on Translation*, p 194.
[10] *Luther's Works,* Volume 35*,* p 217.

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 copying from 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*[11]
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.

In Matthew 21:32 which do you like best?

---

[11] At Mathew 3:11 HCSB has the note: Baptism was the means by which repentance was expressed publicly.

ESV   For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

HCSB   For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you didn't believe him. Tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him, but you, when you saw it, didn't even change your minds then and believe him.

NIV11   For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

NLT   For John the Baptist came and showed you the right way to live, but you didn't believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even when you saw this happening, you refused to believe him and repent of your sins.

MSG   John came to you showing you the right road. You turned up your noses at him, but the crooks and whores believed him. Even when you saw their changed lives, you didn't care enough to change and believe him.

1 Peter 3:21 is a passage in which the translator's view of baptism may influence the translation. It is hard to evade the text's statement that baptism saves, but what is the relationship of baptism to a good conscience? Is baptism the result of a good conscience or the cause of a good conscience? What is suggested by the following translations?

NIV   this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also— not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience towards God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ

ESV   Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

HCSB   Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

NASB   Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

NET   [The flood] prefigured baptism, which now saves you not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience to God – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

NLT   that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

MSG   The waters of baptism do that for you, not by washing away dirt from your skin but by presenting you through Jesus' resurrection before God with a clear conscience.

BBE   baptism, of which this is an image, now gives you salvation, not by washing clean the flesh, but by making you free from the sense of sin before God, through the coming again of Jesus Christ from the dead;

NKJV   there is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

NRSV   baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

KJV   the like figure whereunto [even] baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Eperotema is admittedly a challenging word to translate, but I think in this context "claim" would be better than "appeal", "answer", or "pledge".

Another good test case 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."
ESV   "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense."
NASB   "A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense"
HCSB   "A stone to stumble over, and a rock to trip over."
          Note: Or *stone causing stumbling*
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."

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

Exodus 9:16 says God "caused Pharaoh to stand." Does this refer to predestination, to bringing him to power, or to preserving him? Do the translators' choices reflect a theological leaning?

NIV   But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.
          NIV11 has *"or spared you"* in the footnote.

ESV   But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.

NKJV   "But indeed for this purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.

KJV   And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.
          Note on raised: Heb. *made thee stand*.

NASB   "But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

NLT   But I have spared you for a purpose—to show you my power and to spread my fame throughout the earth.

MSG   But for one reason only I've kept you on your feet: To make you recognize my power so that my reputation spreads in all the Earth.

BBE   But, for this very reason, I have kept you from destruction, to make clear to you my power, and so that my name may be honored through all the earth.

NRSV   But this is why I have let you live: to show you my power, and to make my name resound through all the earth.

In the corresponding passage in Romans 9:17 the tendency toward "raised you up" is more pronounced. All our test translations have "raised you up" except:

NLT   For the Scriptures say that God told Pharaoh, "I have appointed you for the very purpose of displaying my power in you and to spread my fame throughout the earth."

MSG   The same point was made when God said to Pharaoh, "I picked you as a bit player in this drama of my salvation power."

BBE   For the holy Writings say to Pharaoh, For this same purpose did I put you on high, so that I might make my power seen in you, and that there might be knowledge of my name through all the earth.

Does God prophecy the coming of false teachers or foreordain it?

Jude 4   οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι

NIV   For certain men whose condemnation was *written about long ago* have secretly slipped in among you.   Note: *marked out for condemnation*

ESV   For certain people have crept in unnoticed who *long ago were designated for* this condemnation.

HCSB   For some men, who were designated for this judgment long ago

NASB   For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were *long beforehand marked out* for this condemnation

MSG   What has happened is that some people have infiltrated our ranks (our *Scriptures warned us* this would happen)

BBE   For certain men have come among you secretly, *marked out before in the holy Writings* for this evil fate

NKJV   For certain men have crept in unnoticed, *who long ago were marked out* for this condemnation

NRSV   For certain intruders have stolen in among you, people who *long ago were designated* for this condemnation as ungodly

KJV   For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were *before of old ordained* to this condemnation

Which are most Calvinistic? Which do you like best? What would be a dynamic equivalent of οἱ πάλαι προγεγραμμένοι?

Who makes unbelievers ready for destruction? God or unbelievers?

Romans 9:22 κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν

NIV   What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath— prepared for destruction?

NASB   What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

ESV   What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,

HCSB   And what if God, desiring to display His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience objects of wrath ready for destruction?

NLT   In the same way, even though God has the right to show his anger and his power, he is very patient with those on whom his anger falls, who are destined for destruction.

MSG   If God needs one style of pottery especially designed to show his angry
       displeasure
BBE   What if God, desiring to let his wrath and his power be seen, for a long time
       put up with the vessels of wrath which were ready for destruction:
NKJV   What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known,
       endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for
       destruction,
NRSV   What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has
       endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction;
KJV   [What] if God, willing to show [his] wrath, and to make his power known ,
       endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction

Which translations do you like? Why?

Do some translations reflect a "once saved, always saved" bias? In Luke 8:13 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.

2 Peter 2:1 delivers a powerful blow against limited atonement when it says that the Master bought the false teachers who are on their way to destruction. Only the paraphrases are bold enough to challenge this.

MSG   But there were also [lying] prophets among the people then, just as there will be lying
       religious teachers among you. They'll smuggle in destructive divisions, pitting you
       against each other—biting the hand of the One who gave them a chance to have their
       lives back! They've put themselves on a fast downhill slide to destruction
BBE   But there were false prophets among the people, as there will be false teachers among
       you, who will secretly put forward wrong teachings for your destruction, even
       turning away from the Lord who gave himself for them; whose destruction will come
       quickly, and they themselves will be the cause of it.

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*).[12] Is there a reason for the different verbs in this context?

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

---

[12] 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.

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. All of the more dynamic translations interpret the verbs wrongly. Why is the New RSV the best translation?

Where do we look for our ultimate assurance—in our life or in God's verdict? In 1 John 3:20 most translations connect our assurance with the preceding description of works. NLT and translations of the KJV tradition connect our assurance with God's verdict, not with our feeling about our works. ESV seems to be in the middle.

HCSB   Little children, we must not love with word or speech, but with truth and action. [19]This is how we will know we belong to the truth and will convince our conscience in His presence, [20]even if our conscience condemns us, that God is greater than our conscience, and He knows all things.

NIV   This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

ESV   By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything.

NLT   Even if we feel guilty, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

NKJV   For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

KJV   For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

A translation problem that has a bearing on the issue of perfectionism is John's vocabulary for sin. He speaks of "sinning", "having sin", and "doing sin". In 1 John 3:4, is there a difference between sinning and doing sin? Some translations recognize a difference, some don't.

13

Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.

NIV   Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.
ESV   Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.
HCSB Everyone who commits sin also breaks the law; sin is the breaking of law.
NASB Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.
NET   Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; indeed, sin is lawlessness.
NLT   Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God.
MSG   All who indulge in a sinful life are dangerously lawless, for sin is a major disruption of God's order.
BBE   Everyone who is a sinner goes against the law, for sin is going against the law.
NKJV Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.
NRSV Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.
KJV   Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

This issue is more pronounced in 1 John 3:6 where the verb is a simple present tense. A special problem is whether the present tense should be translated as a continuous or persistent action.

πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει· πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν

NIV   No-one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No-one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.
ESV   No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.
HCSB Everyone who remains in Him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him.
MSG   No one who lives deeply in Christ makes a practice of sin. None of those who do practice sin have taken a good look at Christ.
NASB No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.
NET   Everyone who resides in him does not sin; everyone who sins has neither seen him nor known him.
NLT   Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is.
BBE   Anyone who is in him does no sin; anyone who is a sinner has not seen him and has no knowledge of him.
NKJV Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.
NRSV No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him.
KJV   Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. [13]

Can we make our election sure? Is this assurance subjective or objective?

2 Peter 1:10
NIV84 my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.
NIV11 my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election.

---

[13] Other passages to consider on this issue: 1 John 3:8, 9, 1 John 2:1, 1 John 1:8, 10.

ESV   brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure
         The latest revision has: to confirm your calling and election[14]
HCSB   brothers, make every effort to confirm your calling and election,
NASB   brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and
         choosing you
NET   make every effort to be sure of your calling and election.
NLT   brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God
         has called and chosen.
MSG   friends, confirm God's invitation to you, his choice of you. Don't put it off;
         do it now.
BBE   my brothers, take all the more care to make your selection and approval
         certain
NKJV   brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure
NRSV   brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election
KJV   brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure

Do you prefer "make sure" or "confirm"? Why?

Is the idea of a temporary hell introduced into any translations? In Isaiah 24:22, the Hebrew says that the spirits imprisoned by God will be "visited" after many days. Is this a "visitation" of continued punishment or a gracious release from punishment? All of our translations have "punished", but the NIV has a note "released". Does this note lend itself to a temporary hell, or is it referring to the loosing of Satan in Revelation 20?

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"?
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

---

[14] Translations are often making minor updates between major revisions and online sites are sometimes not up-to-date, so any list of passages is likely outdated in a few places.

Which English translation is not Catholic? [15]

James 2:26—do works give life to faith?
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? [16]

James 5:14—Does it make any difference if the anointing is co-ordinated with the prayer or subordinated to it?
NIV   pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.
NET   pray for him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.
NASB pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;
ESV   pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
MSG   pray and anoint you with oil in the name of the Master.
BBE   say prayers over him, putting oil on him in the name of the Lord.
NKJV   pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.
NRSV   pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord.
KJV   pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

Do Protestant translations try to counter Catholic misinterpretations?

Luke 7:47
NIV   Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven— for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."
NASB   For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.
ESV   Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.

---

[15] It's Beck. Explain why.
[16] NLT and KJV. Why?

NLT   I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.

MSG   Impressive, isn't it? She was forgiven many, many sins, and so she is very, very grateful. If the forgiveness is minimal, the gratitude is minimal."

BBE   And so I say to you, She will have forgiveness for her sins which are great in number, because of her great love: but he who has small need of forgiveness gives little love.

NKJV   Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

NRSV   Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.

KJV   Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

Which do you like? Why?

James 2:24
NET   You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.
NIV84 You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.
NIV11 You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.
HCSB   You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.
NASB   You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.
ESV   You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.
NLT   So you see, we are shown to be right with God by what we do, not by faith alone.
MSG   Is it not evident that a person is made right with God not by a barren faith but by faith fruitful in works?
BBE   You see that a man's righteousness is judged by his works and not by his faith only.
NKJV   You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.
NRSV   You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.
KJV   Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Which do you like? Why?

Justification means to declare or show someone or something to be right. When God and his plan are the ones who are "justified", should translations retain the term "justify" to make its declaratory sense clear, or should they offer a different rendering?

Luke 7:29 & 35
NIV   All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John.
NASB   When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.
ESV   When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John,
HCSB   when all the people, including the tax collectors, heard this, they acknowledged God's way of righteousness, because they had been baptized with John's baptism. Note: *they justified God*

17

NET   all the people who heard this, even the tax collectors, acknowledged God's
       justice, because they had been baptized with John's baptism.
NLT   When they heard this, all the people—even the tax collectors—agreed that
       God's way was right, for they had been baptized by John.
MSG   The ordinary and disreputable people who heard John, by being baptized by
       him into the kingdom, are the clearest evidence;
BBE   And all the people, and the tax-farmers, to whom John had given baptism,
       when they had knowledge of these things, gave glory to God.
NKJV   And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God,
       having been baptized with the baptism of John.
NRSV   And all the people who heard this, including the tax collectors,
       acknowledged the justice of God, because they had been baptized with
       John's baptism.
KJV   And all the people that heard [him], and the publicans, justified God, being
       baptized with the baptism of John.

NIV   But wisdom is proved right by all her children."
NASB   Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."
ESV   Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."
HCSB   Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."
NLT   Wisdom is shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it
MSG   Opinion polls don't count for much, do they? The proof of the pudding
       is in the eating.

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 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, [17] but we can give just two
illustrations of the issue.

1 Corinthians 12:5   διαιρέσεις διακονιῶν

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;
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)

Ephesians 4:12   πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων <u>εἰς ἔργον διακονίας</u>
NIV   to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may
       be built up

---

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

NASB   for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of
        the body of Christ;
ESV   to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ
HCSB   for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ
NLT   Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the
        church, the body of Christ.
NET   to equip the saints for the work of ministry, that is, to build up the body of Christ
MSG   to train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ's body, the
        church,
BBE   For the training of the saints as servants in the church, for the building up of
        the body of Christ:
NKJV   for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of
        the body of Christ,
NRSV   to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
KJV   For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying
        of the body of Christ:

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, an office which approximates our office of pastor. A shift of meaning in the terms over the centuries may lead to confusion in translations. *Presbyteroi* originally meant "elders", but the English derivative is "priest". *Episkopoi* meant "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 ministerial 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?

The same kind of issue can arise with the titles of the other kind of "ministers". Sometimes our categories do not match Israel's. The Hebrew term *sarim* is often translated "princes", but this is imprecise, since in English "princes" are understood to be sons of a king. In 2 Chronicles 21:4 the *sarim* are distinguished from the king's sons. Jehoram, who has just become king, kills all his brothers (the princes) as well as the *sarim*. Many translations (NIV, ESV, HCSB, KJV, NKJV, BBE) nevertheless call the *sarim* "princes". Others (NET, NASB, NRSV, NLT, MSG) more correctly say "officials," "rulers," or "leaders". *Sarim* are cabinet ministers and chiefs of staff of the military. In an era of nepotism many of them would have been relatives of the king.

4. The translator should not be too locked in to one theory of translation whether "dynamic equivalence" or "literal translation"[18] 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. When something must be sacrificed, retaining meaning takes priority over literary style.

Luther espoused this eclectic approach: "We extolled the principle of at times retaining the words quite literally, and at times rendering only the meaning." [19]

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

However, there is a noticeable difference between various translations in regard to their "best use." Translations with the degree of freedom of the NIV are pleasant to read, but are inadequate for close 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".[20] 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" and "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 as literal as the ESV are less pleasant to read (read Job in NIV and ESV). From my perspective, the best Bible translation for all-round use would be half way between the NIV and ESV. This refers to the *style* of the translations in question, not to their *quality.* This observation would be true to a greater or lesser degree of any translations that fall into the same part of the translation spectrum.

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

---

[18] These terms are not really adequate, but they are widely understood as representing two basic philosophies. Alternate terms are "functional equivalent" and "form equivalent". A suggested compromise method is "closest natural equivalent". This claims that retaining meaning and using natural English are given equal weight. This is a fine theory. The problem is that it is easier said than done.

[19] "Open Letter on Translating," p 222–223.

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

miktam fall into two camps: 1) golden ode, precious psalm, secret treasure, *or* 2) inscription, memorial, record of memorable thoughts. A third option is 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. Perhaps the translators should have followed this principle in Exodus 25:5 for *tachshim* (the leather source) but not for *shittim* (the wood source).

    NET   fine leather, acacia wood,
    NIV   hides of sea cows; acacia wood;
    TNIV   another durable leather; acacia wood;
    NASB   porpoise skins, acacia wood,
    ESV   goatskins, acacia wood,
    NLT   fine goatskin leather; acacia wood;
    MSG   dolphin skins; acacia wood;
    BBE   leather, and hard wood;
    NKJV   badger skins, and acacia wood;
    NRSV   fine leather, acacia wood,
    KJV   badgers' skins, and shittim wood,

    Should the translator go vague or go specific?
    Other options for *tachshim*: hides of dugongs or sealskins.

"Pedagogue" would be a literal rending of the office of the man who attends the student in Galatians 3:24, but in modern English this term means "teacher". In ancient Greece, however, the man's function was different, 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.
    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? Why? What is wrong with "guardian"? Why does "tutor" work well for WELS pastors? Oh, no!—do we have to give the NRSV a the prize here?

Scylla: Too Equivalent

An overly literal translation, which follows the form of the original too closely, may communicate a wrong meaning. A translation that does not sound natural in the target language cannot function as an equivalent of the source text. The emotional and literary effect is lost.

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:

ESV: For you will not abandon my soul 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.
Holman is similar:
for You will not abandon me to Sheol

The variety of renderings for *sheol* is shown in Deuteronomy, the passage where the rendering "hell" is most possible.

NIV   For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below
NASB   For a fire is kindled in My anger, And burns to the lowest part of Sheol
ESV   For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol
NLT   For my anger blazes forth like fire and burns to the depths of the grave.
MSG   My anger started a fire, a wildfire burning deep down in Sheol
BBE   For my wrath is a flaming fire, burning to the deep parts of the underworld
NKJV   For a fire is kindled by my anger, And shall burn to the lowest hell
NRSV   For a fire is kindled by my anger, and burns to the depths of Sheol
KJV   For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell

A similar situation arises in the New Testament where *hades* serves as the equivalent of *sheol*. In Matthew 11:23 is the contrast between the sky and the ground or heaven and hell?

NIV8   And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to
           the depths.
NIV11   And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to
           Hades.   Note: That is, the realm of the dead
ESV   And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down
           to Hades.
HCSB   And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to Hades.
NASB   And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend
           to Hades;
NET   And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be thrown
           down to Hades!
NLT   And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go
           down to the place of the dead.
MSG   And Capernaum! With all your peacock strutting, you are going to end up in the
           abyss.
BBE   And you, Capernaum, were you not to be lifted up to heaven? you will go down
           into hell:
NKJV   And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades;
NRSV   And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought
           down to Hades.
KJV   And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to
           hell:

     Why is Hades capitalized, but not heaven? Are they different kinds of places?

The catalog of sins in Mark7:22 illustrates another hazard of literal translation, "the evil eye."

  πλεονεξιαι πονηριαι δολος ασελγεια, οφθαλμος πονηρος, βλασφημια υπερηφανια αφροσυνη
  NKJV covetousness wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride,   foolishness.
  NIV   greed,   malice,   deceit,   lewdness,   envy,   slander,   arrogance and folly.
  ESV coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality,   envy,   slander,   pride, foolishness.
  NRSV avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness,   envy,   slander,   pride,   folly.
  NLT greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires,   envy,   slander,   pride, and foolishness.
  MSG greed, depravity, deceptive dealings, carousing, mean looks, slander, arrogance, foolishness.

     Everybody it seems wants to avoid the connotation of the "evil eye" being a gypsy curse, but
     what is "the evil eye"? Most guess "envy" (Mt 20:15), but there is evidence for a malicious
     look or a malicious attitude or stinginess (Prv 23:6 Prv 28:22, Dt 15:9). The downside of
     dynamic equivalent translation is that before you can do it, you have to know what the literal
     expression means.

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" in English, and "heart" can be translated "mind" (Job 16:13, Ps 139:13 Lam 3:13, Rev 2:23).

Psalms 16:7

NIV	even at night my heart instructs me.
NASB	indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.
ESV	in the night also my heart instructs me.
NLT	even at night my heart instructs me.
MSG	The wise counsel GOD gives when I'm awake is confirmed by my sleeping heart.
BBE	knowledge comes to me from my thoughts in the night.
NKJV	My heart also instructs me in the night seasons.
NRSV	in the night also my heart instructs me.
KJV	my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

Other assorted "organ idioms":

Philippians 3:19 is an example of a passage in which "serving the belly" is an idiom for following one's physical appetites or one's desires.

NIV	their god is their stomach
NASB	whose god is their appetite
ESV	their god is their belly
NLT	their god is their appetite
MSG	make their bellies their gods
BBE	whose god is the stomach
NKJV	whose god is their belly
NRSV	their god is the belly
KJV	whose God is their belly

Which two translations offer an interpretive translation? Strange bedfellows?[21]

Joshua 5:1: the idiom is their "hearts melted and there was no spirit or breath".

NIV	their hearts sank and they no longer had the courage to face the Israelites.
NET	they lost their courage and could not even breathe for fear of the Israelites.
NASB	their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel.
ESV	their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.
NLT	they lost heart and were paralyzed with fear because of them.
MSG	their hearts sank; the courage drained out of them just thinking about the People of Israel.

---

[21] NASB and NLT.

BBE   their hearts became like water, and there was no more spirit in them, because
         of the children of Israel.
NKJV their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the
         children of Israel.
NRSV their hearts melted, and there was no longer any spirit in them, because of the
         Israelites.
 KJV   their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them anymore, because of the
         children of Israel.

Joshua 10:21: the idiom is "no one moved his tongue".
    NET   no one dared threaten the Israelites.
    NIV   no-one uttered a word against the Israelites.
    NASB no one uttered a word against any of the sons of Israel.
    ESV   not a man moved his tongue against any of the people of Israel.
    NLT   no one dared to speak even a word against Israel.
    MSG   there was no criticism that day from the People of Israel!
    BBE   no one said a word against the children of Israel.
    NKJV   no one moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.
    NRSV no one dared to speak against any of the Israelites.
    KJV   none moved his tongue against any of the children of Israel.
    How did the Message reach the opposite conclusion than every other version?

In Exodus 6:12 & 30: the idiom is "uncircumcised lips".
    NIV   I speak with faltering lips
    ESV   I am of uncircumcised lips
    HCSB I speak with difficulty
    NASB I am unskilled in speech
    NLT   I'm such a clumsy speaker!
    MSG   I stutter.
    BBE   whose lips are unclean
    NKJV I am of uncircumcised lips
    NRSV poor speaker that I am
    KJV   who [am] of uncircumcised lips
    None of the guesses from context really indicate why lack of skill is described as lack of
    circumcision. Hearts and ears can also be uncircumcised (Lev 26:41; Jer 9:26; Jer 6:10).
    What is the point of the idiom?

Charybdis: Not Equivalent Enough

A smooth-sounding translation is not necessarily a good translation. 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 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.[22] 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.

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.

---

[22] 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

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 of the Hebrew 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, however, 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 the use of *kurios* 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	
MSG	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? Come to think of it, another translation that falls into this category is Christ. This is a transliteration not a translation, but I don't think any translation except the Voice wants to eliminate "Christ" from the New Testament.

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"? [23]
should we call the tabernacle "the tent"?
should we call the heavenly host "the army of heaven"?
should we substitute "good news" for "gospel"?

We have gotten used to the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:1), but was it really a garden as we think of a garden? Would "orchard" (NET) or "grove" (NLT) be more accurate? In the same verse, is the Kidron a valley, a ravine, a brook, or a stream? Or are none of these correct?

Places names are another issue. Do we go ancient or modern? We sometimes use the modern English name (Egypt, not Mizraim). But sometimes we use the ancient name. *Aram* is a special problem. The modern name of the country is Syria and the people are Syrians, but modern historians call the ancient country and people Aram and Arameans. In 2 Chronicles 24:23 KJV, ESV, NKJV, and NET go with Syrian.   NIV, HCSB, NASB, NRSV, NLT, MSG, and BBE go with Aramean. Similarly, what should we do with "Asia"?

---

[23] In the first edition this paper I thought "manger" was an 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)."

Another issue pertaining to updating is how important is it to retain heritage terms such as "justify" "sanctify," "saints," and "atonement". If the steward becomes a manager (Luke 16:3), what will happen to "stewardship"? Does it matter?

Sometimes attempts of recent translations to correct or improve 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 *tzalmuth*.

Sometimes changes in traditional translations, even if they could be correct, raise suspicions among some readers. Consider John 1:14. The Greek *monogenes* has traditionally been translated "only begotten", and this became a standard way of referring to Christ as the only divine Son of the Father. The term *monogenes,* however*,* does not always imply divinity since it can also refer to a human only-child. Some think that the connotation of the word is "one and only" or "one of a kind." Notice how various translations handle the issue. (A side issue here is the verb for "dwelling". Literally, ἐσκήνωσεν is "tented" among us. In biblical usage this does not imply a temporary residence. Formerly, the NIV had this connotation, "dwelt among us for a while". Now, of the translations surveyed, only BBE retains this connotation.)

  NIV   The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
  NET   Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory – the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.
  ESV   the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
  MSG   The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.
  NLT   So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.
  BBE   so the Word became flesh and took a place among us for a time; and we saw his glory—such glory as is given to an only son by his father—saw it to be true and full of grace.

NRSV the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory
        as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.
NASB the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the
        only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
NKJV the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as
        of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
KJV   the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory
        as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

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." "Propitiation" emphasizes a change of God's feelings. While this connotation is contained in the Greek word, and we do escape God's wrath through Christ's work, the word *hilasterion* was being used to translate the Hebrew *kopheret*, the name of the cover of the ark of the covenant. *Kopheret* is 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 the long use of the KJV changed the connotation of the word.

Romans 3:25   ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι
NIV84   God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood
            Note: as the one who would turn aside his wrath, taking away sin
NIV11   God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his
            blood—to be received by faith. Note: The Greek for *sacrifice of atonement* refers
            to the atonement cover on the ark of the covenant.
KJV   Whom God hath set forth [to be] a propitiation through faith in his blood
NASB   whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.
ESV   whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.
HCSB   God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood.
              Note: a propitiatory sacrifice, an offering of atonement, or a mercy seat
NKJV   whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith
NRSV   whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through
            faith
NLT   For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God
            when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.
MSG   God sacrificed Jesus on the altar of the world to clear that world of sin. Having
            faith in him sets us in the clear.
BBE   Whom God has put forward as the sign of his mercy, through faith, by his blood,
            to make clear his righteousness
NET   God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat accessible through faith.
A side issue here is whether the verse refers to "faith in his blood".

1 John 2:2
KJV   he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the
            whole world.
ESV   He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of
            the whole world.
HCSB   He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for
            those of the whole world

NASB   He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for
          those of the whole world.
NKJV   He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the
          whole world.
NIV   He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins
          of the whole world.
NLT   He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the
          sins of all the world.
MSG   When he served as a sacrifice for our sins, he solved the sin problem for good--
          not only ours, but the whole world's.
BBE   He is the offering for our sins; and not for ours only, but for all the world.
NRSV   he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins
          of the whole world.

Sometimes our exegetical tradition as reflected in the Lutheran 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.

Another instance where "faith" has a special meaning is 1Timothy 5:12. This passage concerns
widows who enlist to serve the church but then change their mind and get married. What wrong
impression is given if the special nuance of "faith" is not picked up?

NET   they incur judgment for breaking their former pledge.
NIV   they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge.
NASB thus incurring condemnation, because they have set aside their previous pledge.
ESV   and so incur condemnation for having abandoned their former faith.
HCSB receive condemnation because they have renounced their original pledge.
NLT   they would be guilty of breaking their previous pledge.
MSG   by breaking their word, they're liable to go from bad to worse,
BBE   they are judged because they have been false to their first faith;
NKJV having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith.
NRSV so they incur condemnation for having violated their first pledge.
KJV   having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith.

Sometimes none of our base translations get it right. In 1Corinthians 9:20-21 Paul says Christians do
not live *under* the law, they do not live *without* law, but they live *in* Christ's law. By saying that
Christians live under Christ's law the translations blur the distinctions which 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.
          Also ESV NASB NET: under the law of Christ;   NRSV: under Christ's law

BBE   under law to Christ;   NKJV: under law toward Christ;   KJV: under the law to Christ

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.

MSG   meticulous moralists, loose-living immoralists   [A swing and a miss!]

HCSB, which was not included in the original paper, has "within Christ's law" and thus is the winner.

Another interesting passage that reflects on a translation's understanding of the Christian and law is 1 Timothy 1:9:

NET   law is not intended for a righteous person, but for lawless and rebellious people

NIV   law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels

NASB law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious

ESV   the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient

HCSB the law is not meant for a righteous person, but for the lawless and rebellious

NLT   the law was not intended for people who do what is right. It is for people who are lawless and rebellious

MSG   the law code isn't primarily for people who live responsibly, but for the irresponsible

BBE   the law is made, not for the upright man, but for those who have no respect for law and order

NKJV the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate

NRSV the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient

KJV   the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient

What are the key differences?

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" expressions as "common" and "colloquial" English and "lofty" and "literary" as "lofty" and "literary" English. In attempting to homogenize the level of biblical texts the translator risks oversimplifying the message and diminishing the literary and artistic values of the text.

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 reproduced with 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.

Old Testament

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 a 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.[24] The translator should try to preserve this variety.

The translator's goal is to sound archaic only if the original sounded archaic. There appears to be some deliberate archaizing, particularly in Psalms. In Psalms 113 and 123 the psalmist places archaic construct endings (*y/i*) onto some of the words. This usage is especially surprising since some of the words with the archaic ending are not even constructs.[25] It seems unlikely therefore that these endings are real preservations of archaic forms. The grammarian Gesenius calls the *yod* ending on these unusual forms "an ornamental device of poetic style" (90m). It seems likely these endings were deliberately used to give the poem an archaic flavor. In Psalm 110 the same ending occurs in the phrase "according to the order of Melchizedek" (*al divrati malchi tzedek*). Proper names often preserve archaic endings within them, as is the case in the middle of Melch*i*zedek. Since the psalmist had to keep the archaic ending on *malchi,* it appears he added it also to *divrat* so that the two forms would match.

The so-called vav-consecutive imperfects, which probably developed from the ancient prefixed preterite, and the imperfects ending in *ah* probably also became archaizing at some point of the development of the Old Testament.

Critical scholars often try to sort biblical texts into Early Biblical Hebrew and Late Biblical Hebrew on basis of differences of style that are thought to be chronological (the relative markers *asher* and *she* are an example), but more recently there has been a tendency to recognize that important elements of so-called EBH and LBH do not represent different chronological periods in the history of Biblical Hebrew but instead represent concurrent styles of literary Hebrew throughout the biblical period.[26] Authors may have chosen these styles for specific literary aims.

Because we have over a thousand years of transmission of the Old Testament (1400-300 BC) for which we have little textual evidence, it is difficult to distinguish between archaism and archaizing. "Archaisms" are readings that were contemporary when written but are now out of date (much of the language of the King James). "Archaizing" is an attempt to recreate the language of the past (prayers or hymns written in King Jamesese in the 19th century. Most of the archaic language in the Old Testament is real archaic language.

Regardless of whether or not archaizing can be clearly identified and traced in the Old Testament, 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.

New Testament

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 personal letters or literary epistles? Why is the

---

[24] For example, the Joseph stories and the Elijah stories which are very different from genealogies and annals.

25 The construct is a pre-genitive case in Hebrew, that is, it makes the second word in the pair an adjective.

[26] Young and Rezetko, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts,* Equinox, 2009.

style of the letter to the Hebrews different? A different author? The letter John delivered to the seven churches of Asia 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 convey 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. Here we can list only a few of the chief examples from the standard lists of semiticisms.

> The Hebrew style of stringing sentences together with *vav*'s is found in Mark 10:33-34, "behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and (*kai*) the Son of Man will be delivered up to the chief priests and scribes, and (*kai*) they will condemn him to death, and (*kai*) they will deliver him up to the Gentiles. And (*kai*) they will mock him and (*kai*) they will spit upon him and (*kai*) they will scourge him and (*kai*) they will kill him, and (*kai*) three days later he will rise again." This is not impossible Greek, but more typical Greek style would have subordinated more of these clauses.

> The use of *anthropos* "a man, a person" as a substitute for the indefinite pronoun *tis*, "a certain person, someone" is not impossible Greek but the frequency seems Semitic. This use of *anthropos* like the Hebrew *ish* is found most frequently in the sayings of Jesus, and most examples come from Mark's gospel (4:26, 12:1).

> Semitic usage often repeats a preposition before every noun of a series which it governs. Such a construction is not good literary Greek. This repetition occurs no less than eleven times in Mark alone (3:7-8, 6:56, 11:1). Some English translations tend to repeat the preposition each time it occurs in a series (KJV, RSV); others translate only the initial preposition, which is more in keeping with the English idiom (NIV, JB, NEB).

> New Testament Greek sometimes uses prepositions in a way that reflects Hebrew idioms, for example *homologeo en* in Matthew 7:32.

> "I loved Jacob, but Esau I hated," is a Hebraic way of expressing greater and lesser love. Jesus echoes this idiom in Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Jesus' disciples must place all others second to him. This understanding is confirmed by the parallel passage in Matthew 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." Luke preserves the Hebrew style, Matthew is better Greek.

> The use of *egeneto* followed by another verb is parallel to the Hebrew use of *vayihi,* "it came to pass." This Semitism occurs more frequently in Luke's writings than elsewhere (1:5, 8;

2:1, 6; 5:1, 12; 3:21; 9:37). It is striking that Luke who was probably the best writer of Greek among the evangelists seems so interested in reflecting the Hebrew setting of Jesus' life and speech.

In Hebrew a third person plural verb is often the equal of a passive. This usage occurs in New Testament Greek (Mt 7:16)—they do not pick grapes from thorns=grapes are not picked from thorns (Mt 7:16).

The Beatitudes (Mt 5:3-11), the Magnificat (Lk 2:46-56), and the Song of Simeon (Lk 2:34-35) all reflect the Hebrew style of their speakers.

The Hebrew *lemor* is reflected in the common idiom, "Jesus answered and said" (Mt 11:25 in KJV) ("Jesus said" in NIV).

Expressions with a genitive which reflects the pattern of the Hebrew construct are very common: mammon of unrighteousness, man of sin, son of perdition, etc. The Hebrew superlative is reflected in such expressions as king of kings and lord of lords.

In the New Testament Greek words sometimes take on Hebrew meanings. The example of *nomos/torah* was 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."[27] 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 Greek sense, but in technical senses established by theological tradition.

There is a lot of debate about the degree of semiticism in the New Testament and about the reason for those semiticisms (translation from a semitic source, the author's hybrid Greek, the existence of a Septuagint dialect, a deliberate literary style?) [28] 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

---

[27] 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.
[28] David Alan Black, "New Testament Semitisms" (*The Bible Translator* 39/2 (April 1988), p. 215-223.
Michael Marlowe, "The Semitic Style of the New Testament," http://www.bible-researcher.com/hebraisms.html.

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 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 likewise has "making the winds His messengers, flames of fire His servants.

Does Psalms 4:4/5 רִגְז֗וּ וְֽאַל־תֶּ֫חֱטָ֥אוּ refer to anger or fear? In the citation of this verse in Ephesians 4:26, all translations agree that Paul, like the Septuagint, applies the verse to anger. Should we be bound by this interpretation in our rendering of Psalm 4? Is Paul actually quoting the verse or just using the language to make a different point?

    NIV   In your anger do not sin
    TNIV Tremble and do not sin;
    NASB Tremble, and do not sin'
    ESV   Be angry, and do not sin;
    NLT   Don't sin by letting anger control you.
    MSG Complain if you must, but don't lash out
    BBE   Let there be fear in your hearts, and do no sin;
    NKJV Be angry, and do not sin..
    NRSV When you are disturbed, do not sin;
    KJV   Stand in awe, and sin not:

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 2:9, "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 bleaching of David's colorful expression "Everyone who *shatans* against the wall" to "every male" is an example of this flaw (See the discussion under Principle 4).

"I proclaim the greatness of the Lord" does not convey the same emotion 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! [29]
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.

The "soul" issue becomes even more complicated because the word "soul" in Hebrew is a feminine noun. All the pronouns and verbs that refer to it must be feminine. In Psalm 103 David is addressing himself with the words "Bless the Lord, O my soul". He continues speaking to his souls with the words, "The Lord forgives all *your* (fs) sins and heals all *your* (fs) diseases." If the translator retains the second person, readers will get the mistaken impression that David is talking to them, rather than talking to himself. If the translator switches to the first person, he will not be following the Hebrew grammar. What should he

---

[29] WELS Pastors Version.

do? In the case in question, all of our translations retain the second person except NLT which has "he forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases."[30]

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 with 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 Sam. 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
NASB   the caperberry is ineffective
NLT   the caperberry no longer inspires sexual desire
How about "the caperberry no longer arouses desire"?

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." The same principle applies in the following areas.

Clothing

Updating clothing names 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 a "tunic" a "shirt" and a "cloak" a "coat"? 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)

---

[30] A similar situation occurs when an underling says to a superior, "Forgive your servant". This means "forgive me" but it is not emotionally equivalent to "forgive me". An English reader might be confused by the third person "servant", but using the first person pronoun loses some of the content.

Measurements

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.
> HCSB   The ark will 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.

For most common objects, readers would best be served by measurements in a system they understand, so at first glance it might seem that we should give the palm to NIV 1984 and HCSB. So why would NIV 2011 revert to ancient cubits? There are some problems with converting to modern measurements. 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),[31] or "dozens of loaves" (MSG)?

Leviticus 24:5 describes some really big loaves of bread. 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. [32]

Ruth 2:17 informs us that Ruth gathered an ephah of barley. How much was that? How long could it feed Naomi and Ruth? In their translation NIV NASB ESV BBE NKJV NRSV and KJV simply tell us the amount was an ephah. Others explain the amount.

> NLT   it filled an entire basket.
> MSG   she ended up with nearly a full sack of barley!
> HCSB   it was about 26 quarts of barley.
> NET   it came to about thirty pounds of barley!

In John 2:6 Jesus changes six jars of water, each containing two or three "measures", into wine. Lots of wine, but not a very precise measure. Is this amount of wine 12 to 18 firkins (KJV, BBE)? Or is it 120 to 180 gallons of wine (NIV NET, NASB, ESV, NLT, MSG, NKJV, NRSV)?

---

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

[32] NET note says this equals 7 quarts. Estimates for an ephah vary from 22 to 35 liters, 6/10 bushel to 1 bushel.

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   a basket
    NRSV KJV   a bushel basket or bushel
    NIV   a bowl
    BBE   a vessel
    MSG   a wash tub

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

A special problem is the "pound" (λίτρα). The problem is that a biblical pound is smaller than an English pound. In John 12:3 Mary anoints Jesus with a "pound" of ointment. Many translations simply translate λίτρα a "pound". NET corrects to "three quarters of a pound". NIV says "a pint". NLT has "a twelve-ounce jar". MSG just has "a jar". In John 19:39 Nicodemas brings myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds (ὡς λίτρας ἑκατόν). NET, ESV, NLT, and MSG correct to 75 pounds. But even that seems like too much for one burial. With a small correction to the Greek, the text would read "a pound of each." None of the translations surveyed follow this conjecture.

In distance measurements translators have a choice of four systems: the ancient, the old English, the American, or the metric. In John 6:19 the disciples rowed "25 or 30 stadia". Did the disciples row "five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs" (KJV), "three or four miles" (NET, NASB, ESV, NLT, MSG, BBE, NKJV),"three miles", or "three and a half miles" (NIV)?

Money

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) Did the poor widow give two mites, two *lepta,* or two small bronze coins? (Lk 21:2) And how do we translate talents and darics to dollars or euros? In the parable in Luke 15:8 does it matter if *drachma* or "coin" is used?

The problem is greater in the Old Testament since there were no coins until near the end of the Old Testament era. In Judges 16:5 the Philistines promise each of the five leaders will pay Delilah "eleven hundred of silver" to betray Samson.   Was this really big money or did the Philistines get a bargain? (If you need help, see Judges 17:10.) All of our translations except the Message have some variant of "eleven hundred pieces of silver" or "eleven hundred shekels". The Message eliminates the number 1000 by changing "thousand" to "company: "Each man's company will give you a hundred shekels of silver." This reduces the quantity from 5500 shekels to 500 shekels. What is good about these translations? What is wrong with them? How would you fix the translation? [33]

Can "talents" (Mt 25:15) be converted to "bags of gold" (NIV 11) or "bags of silver" or "$1000" (MSG)?[34]

---

[33] There were no coins in the days of the judges. The Philistines probably weighed out 5500 shekels, rather than counting out 5500 one-shekel ingots.
[34] A talent was 15-20 years wages for an average worker.

Sometimes the Bible itself updates units of measurement. In 1 Chronicles 29:7 the chronicler reports that David gave five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold for the temple. The *daric* was a weight as well as a coin size from the time of the chronicler, not from the time of David. Most English translations retain the literal "daric". NLT says "10,000 gold coins", which is a real anachronism since there were no coins in David's time. MSG says "185 pounds of gold". KJV translates "daric" as "dram", a measurement in the avoirdupois weight system, today used by apothecaries and to refer to a small drink of liquor. Both terms may relate to the Greek *drachma.*

<center>The Calendar and Clock</center>

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.

Exodus 19:1 בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה

> NIV84   In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt—on the very day—they came to the Desert of Sinai. *This seems vague and non-committal. If "the very day" means the same day of the month, this could refer to either a two month or three month interval. Likewise NIV11, NET, BBE, NKJV, KJV.*
>
> NASB   In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. *Also vague.*
>
> ESV   On the third new moon after the people of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. *This would be 2 ½ months. Also NRSV.*
>
> NLT   Exactly two months after the Israelites left Egypt, they arrived in the wilderness of Sinai. *Self-explanatory.*
>
> MSG   Three months after leaving Egypt the Israelites entered the Wilderness of Sinai. *Self-explanatory.*

Could Anna have been more than 105 years old (84 years of widowhood, 7 years of marriage, married at 16) or was she 84 years old?

> NIV   then was a widow until she was eighty-four.
> NASB   then as a widow to the age of eighty-four.
> ESV   then as a widow until she was eighty-four.
> NLT   then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four.
> NRSV   then as a widow to the age of eighty-four.
> NKJV   this woman was a widow of about eighty–four years
> NET   she had lived as a widow since then for eighty-four years.
> MSG   and a widow for eighty-four.
> BBE   She had been a widow for eighty-four years
> KJV   she [was] a widow of about fourscore and four years

Similar is the problem of time of day. Should we stick with the biblical terms like the "sixth hour"? If we interpret, is the sixth hour noon or six in the morning? (John 4:6, 19:14) Concerning the three hours of Good Friday, NIV NASB ESV BBE NKJV & KJV go with the

"sixth hour to the ninth hour". NET NLT MSG HCSB & NRSV go with "noon and three in the afternoon". In John 1:39 is the tenth hour (NIV, NASB, ESV BBE, NKJV, KJV), "four o'clock" (NET, NLT), "late afternoon" (MSG), or "two hours before night" (KJV note).[35] In John 4:52 the choice is between the seventh hour and one o'clock.[36] The surprising thing here is that so many translations stick with the archaic times rather than converting into our system.

<center>Science</center>

Another problem arises when the "scientific categories" of the biblical writers do not match our categories. In Leviticus 11:3 one of the traits of a clean animal is that it "chews the cud". All of our reference translations use this term, "chews the cud", except BBE which has "whose food comes back into its mouth to be crushed again". This is a good dynamic equivalent of "chew the cud", but it does not cover all the animals placed into the category of "clean". Technically speaking, "cud" is a portion of food that returns from a ruminant's stomach into the mouth to be chewed for the second time. More scientifically, it is "a bolus of semi-degraded food regurgitated from the reticulorumen of a ruminant". Some of the clean animals such as rabbits are not ruminants, and thus they do not meet this definition. They practice refection. "Refection" is a process in which animals, like hares, eat their own dung mixed with undigested material. According to our modern categories the biblical clean animals do not share one class, since they do not share the same kind of digestive system. For the biblical writers the common denominator seems to be re-chewing, not the anatomy of the digestive system.

I don't know if brewing is a science, but if it is, how should we translate "the other adult beverage" from Hebrew? In distinction from "wine" *shekar* was grain-based but often had fruit or honey thrown in to help the process. It did not have hops. It was not distilled. Is it beer, malt liquor, other fermented drink, or an adult beverage?

> Numbers 6:3
> NIV   he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink.
> HCSB   he is to abstain from wine and beer. He must not drink vinegar made from wine or from beer.
> ESV   he shall separate himself from wine and strong drink. He shall drink no vinegar made from wine or strong drink
> NET   wine and strong drink, he must drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from strong drink,
> NASB   he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink,
> NLT   they must give up wine and other alcoholic drinks. They must not use vinegar made from wine or from other alcoholic drinks,
> MSG   you must not drink any wine or beer, no intoxicating drink of any kind,
> BBE   he is to keep himself from wine and strong drink, and take no mixed wine or strong drink

---

[35] "Two hours before night" is good in that these "hours" were not precise units of time, but one twelfth of the day light period. Wealthy people could have clocks of sorts, but most people did not.
[36] In most situations like this the alternative is in a footnote, so the only issue is ease of reading.

NKJV   he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither
            vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink;
NRSV   they shall separate themselves from wine and strong drink; they shall drink no
            wine vinegar or other vinegar,
KJV   he shall separate [himself] from wine and strong drink, and shall drink no
            vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink,

Which do you like and why?

Should we use popular or scientific terms? Is "womb" too archaic a term, and is "uterus" too technical? If you don't like those, what would be better?

Numbers 3:12
NET   every firstborn who opens the womb among the Israelites
NIV   the first male offspring of every Israelite woman
HCSB   every firstborn Israelite from the womb
NASB   every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel
ESV   every firstborn who opens the womb among the people of Israel
NLT   for all the firstborn sons of the people of Israel
MSG   every Israelite mother's firstborn son
BBE   the first sons of the children of Israel
NKJV   every firstborn who opens the womb among the children of Israel
NRSV   all the firstborn that open the womb among the Israelites
KJV   firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel

Which do you like and why? What is wrong with NLT and BBE? A provocative question: is "virgins" too technical a term in some contexts?

Were the "moon-struck" people healed by Jesus "lunatics", "epileptics", or something else? The difficulty is increased when the symptoms are also linked to demonic possession.

Matthew 17:15
NIV   Lord, have mercy on my son," he said. "He has seizures and is suffering greatly.
         He often falls into the fire or into the water.
NASB   Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is a lunatic and is very ill; for he often falls
         into the fire and often into the water.
ESV   Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. For
         often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.
NET   Lord, have mercy on my son, because he has seizures and suffers terribly, for he
         often falls into the fire and into the water.
NLT   Lord, have mercy on my son. He has seizures and suffers terribly. He often falls
         into the fire or into the water.
MSG   Master, have mercy on my son. He goes out of his mind and suffers terribly,
         falling into seizures. Frequently he is pitched into the fire, other times into the
         river.
BBE   Lord have mercy on my son: for he is off his head, and is in great pain; and
         frequently he goes falling into the fire, and frequently into the water.
NKJV   Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he
         often falls into the fire and often into the water.
NRSV   Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he
         often falls into the fire and often into the water.

KJV   Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick , and sore vexed : for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water

In Matthew 4:24 the demon-possessed and the "lunatics" are listed separately but next to each other (δαιμονιζομένους καὶ σεληνιαζομένους). MSG reduces this to mental, emotional, or physical ailments.

Luke 13:11

NIV   a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all.

NASB there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.

ESV   there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself.

NET   a woman was there who had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten herself up completely.

NLT   he saw a woman who had been crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to stand up straight.

MSG   there was a woman present, so twisted and bent over with arthritis that she couldn't even look up. She had been afflicted with this for eighteen years.

BBE   there was a woman who had had a disease for eighteen years; she was bent, and was not able to make herself straight.

NKJV behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up.

NRSV just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight.

KJV   behold , there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together , and could in no wise lift up [herself].

Which translations exorcise the demons?

Was the disease that made people unclean "leprosy" or an "infectious skin disease"? Is leprosy a technical term today?

    NIV   an infectious skin disease
    NASB an infection of
    NET   a diseased infection
    ESV   a case of leprous disease
    NLT   a serious skin disease
    MSG   a serious skin disease
    BBE   the disease of a leper
    NKJV a leprous sore
    NRSV a leprous disease
    KJV   the plague of 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.

Ephesians 2:19

NET   So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household,

NIV   Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

NASB   So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,

ESV   So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

HCSB   So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household,

NLT   So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

MSG   That's plain enough, isn't it? You're no longer wandering exiles. This kingdom of faith is now your home country. You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You [belong] here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building.

BBE   So then you are no longer as those who have no part or place in the kingdom of God, but you are numbered among the saints, and of the family of God,

NKJV   Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

NRSV   So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

KJV   Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

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?

A parallel case is *ruach*, "spirit". In 2 Chronicles 9:4 we are informed that when the Queen of Sheba met Solomon, she had no longer any *ruach* in her. Which is the best dynamic equivalent?

KJV   there was no more spirit in her.
NKJV   there was no more spirit in her.
NRSV   there was no more spirit left in her.
BBE   there was no more spirit in her.
NIV   she was overwhelmed.
NLT   she was overwhelmed. She was also amazed
ESV   there was no more breath in her.
MSG   it all took her breath away.
NASB   she was breathless.
HCSB   it took her breath away.

Are MSG, NASB, and HCSB strange bedfellows?

Even common words occasionally have an unusual meaning. *Kohanim* means "priest" and David's sons are called *kohanim* (1 Samuel 8:18)*,* but they could not have been levitical priests. What were they? Most translations stick with "priests" but others try a more interpretive approach. Which do you like?

NIV   royal advisers
NASB chief ministers
HCSB chief officials
ESV   priests
NLT   priestly leaders
NKJV chief ministers
KJV   chief rulers

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.

1 Peter 1:24
ESV   All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass.
NIV 84 All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field
NIV 11 All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field
NLT   People are like grass; their beauty is like a flower in the field.
MSG   The old life is a grass life, its beauty as short-lived as wildflowers

A greater effect on the interpretation is present in the following example.

Romans 8:3-4
For God has done what the law, weakened by the *flesh*, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful *flesh* and for sin, he condemned sin in the *flesh*, [4]in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the *flesh* but according to the Spirit. ESV

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the *sinful nature*, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of *sinful man* to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in *sinful man*, [4] in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the *sinful nature* but according to the Spirit. NIV 1984

For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the *flesh*, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful *flesh* to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the *flesh*, [4] in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the *flesh* but according to the Spirit. NIV 2011

1 Peter 3:18:   In this passage "flesh" and "spirit" probably refer to Jesus' humiliation and exaltation, that is, to his being put to death in a lowly condition, but made alive in a glorious condition. Notice how translations may limit the options for "flesh" and "spirit".

NIV   put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit
ESV   being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,
HCSB put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.
NASB having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

NET   by being put to death in the flesh but by being made alive in the spirit.
NLT   he suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.
MSG   he went through it all—was put to death and then made alive—to bring us to God.
BBE   being put to death in the flesh, but given life in the Spirit;
NKJV being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,
NRSV put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,
KJV   being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit

Note: in a few other passages such as 1 Timothy 3:16 "flesh" and "spirit" refer to Jesus' humiliation and exaltation.

NIV84 He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit,
NIV11   He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit,
HCSB   He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit,
NASB He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit
NET   He was revealed in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit,
ESV   He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit,
NLT   Christ was revealed in a human body and vindicated by the Spirit.
MSG   He appeared in a human body, was proved right by the invisible Spirit,
BBE   He who was seen in the flesh, who was given God's approval in the spirit,
NKJV   God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit
NRSV   manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit,

Which translation comes close?

Another example of blurring distinctions 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 in NIV 2011 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.

The New Testament refers to demons as both "evil spirits" and "unclean spirits". Should translations distinguish these two idioms or blend them? A case in point is Mark 3:11 where the Greek has "unclean spirits".

ESV NET NASB BBE NKJV NRSV KJV retain "unclean spirits"
NIV84 NLT MSG   harmonize to "evil spirits"
NIV11   has "impure spirits"

Is anything lost in the interpretive translations?

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 dealt with this issue 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 English slang expression is the best equivalent of *shatan*?

<div align="center">The 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? [37]

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."

Does the euphemism in Luke 1:34 need to be explained as many translations do?

    KJV   Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?
    NKJV   Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"
    HCSB   "How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a man?"
    NIV   "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"
    ESV   Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"
    NASB Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"
    NLT   Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin."
    MSG   Mary said to the angel, "But how? I've never slept with a man."
    BBE   Mary said to the angel, How may this be, because I have had no knowledge of a man?
    NRSV Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

In the following example does the euphemism "lie with" need explanation? Which explanation is better?

    Exodus 22:16
    ESV   If a man seduces a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her
    NIV   If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her
    HCSB   When a man seduces a virgin who was not promised in marriage, and he has
            sexual relations with her

---

[37] How about "was intimate with"?

The Bible has different euphemisms for sex. Is it legitimate to reduce them to one or two choices like "have sex with" or "sleep with"?

One Hebrew euphemism for sex is "go to". It can refer either to proper sexual relations within marriage or to adultery, as it does in the heading of Psalm 51.

    Genesis 29:30   וַיָּבֹא גַּם אֶל־רָחֵל
    NASB So Jacob went in to Rachel also
    ESV   So Jacob went in to Rachel also
    NKJV Then Jacob also went in to Rachel
    NRSV So Jacob went in to Rachel also
    KJV   he went in also unto Rachel
    NIV   Jacob lay with Rachel also
    HCSB   Jacob slept with Rachel also,
    NET   Jacob had marital relations with Rachel as well
    NLT   So Jacob slept with Rachel, too
    MSG   Jacob then slept with her
    BBE   Then Jacob took Rachel as his wife

    Genesis 30:4   וַתִּתֶּן־לוֹ אֶת־בִּלְהָה שִׁפְחָתָהּ לְאִשָּׁה וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ יַעֲקֹב:
    ESV   So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.
    NIV   So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her,
    HCSB   So Rachel gave her slave Bilhah to Jacob as a wife, he slept with her.
    NASB   So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.
    BBE   So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.
    NKJV   Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her.
    NRSV   So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife; and Jacob went in to her.
    KJV   And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.
    NET   So Rachel gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob had marital
             relations with her.
    NLT   So Rachel gave her servant, Bilhah, to Jacob as a wife, and he slept with her.
    MSG   So she gave him her maid Bilhah for a wife and Jacob slept with her.

Another euphemism for having sex is "take" a woman. This, in some contexts, can mean "marry." If the meaning is uncertain, would it be good to stay literal?

    Leviticus 20:17 וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־יִקַּח אֶת־אֲחֹתוֹ בַּת־אָבִיו אוֹ בַת־אִמּוֹ וְרָאָה אֶת־עֶרְוָתָהּ
    NASB   If there is a man who takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter,
            so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace.
    NET   If a man has sexual intercourse with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or
           his mother, so that he sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace.
    NIV   If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they
           have sexual relations, it is a disgrace.
    ESV   If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees
           her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace.
    HCSB If a man marries his sister, whether his father's daughter or his mother's daughter,
           and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace.
    NLT   If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they
           have sexual relations, it is a shameful disgrace.

MSG   If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or mother, and they have sex, that's a disgrace. They must be publicly cut off from their people. He has violated his sister and will be held responsible.

BBE   And if a man takes his sister, daughter of his father or his mother, and has sex relations with her and she with him, it is an act of shame.

NKJV   If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing.

NRSV   If a man takes his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace.

KJV   if a man shall take his sister, his father's daughter, or his mother's daughter, and see her nakedness, and she see his nakedness; it [is] a wicked thing.

It seems clear that "taking" and "uncovering the nakedness" are not synonyms here.

Also in Leviticus 18:6 the euphemism is "uncovering the nakedness" (or is this a euphemism in this case?).

אִישׁ אִישׁ אֶל־כָּל־שְׁאֵר בְּשָׂרוֹ לֹא תִקְרְבוּ לְגַלּוֹת עֶרְוָה

NASB   None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the LORD.

ESV   None of you shall approach any one of his close relatives to uncover nakedness. I am the LORD.

NIV   No-one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

HCSB   You are not to come near any close relative for sexual intercourse;

NET   No man is to approach any close relative to have sexual intercourse with her. I am the Lord.

NLT   You must never have sexual relations with a close relative, for I am the Lord.

MSG   Don't have sex with a close relative. I am GOD.

BBE   You may not have sex connection with anyone who is a near relation: I am the Lord.

NKJV   None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I am the LORD.

NRSV   None of you shall approach anyone near of kin to uncover nakedness: I am the LORD.

KJV   None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I [am] the LORD. {near...: Heb. remainder of his flesh}

Is it only sexual intercourse which is prohibited by this term or also the preliminary uncovering of the nakedness? See the story of Noah and Ham.

Sometimes there are very unusual expressions. In Leviticus 18:20 the Hebrew says "to the wife of your fellow citizen you shall not give your layer for seed." (The meaning of "your layer" (שְׁכָבְתְּךָ) is uncertain.) The phrase seems to mean "give an emission of semen".

וְאֶל־אֵשֶׁת עֲמִיתְךָ לֹא־תִתֵּן שְׁכָבְתְּךָ לְזָרַע לְטָמְאָה־בָהּ

NIV   Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.

NASB   You shall not have intercourse with your neighbor's wife, to be defiled with her.

ESV   And you shall not lie sexually with your neighbor's wife and so make yourself unclean with her.

HCSB   You are not to have sexual intercourse with your neighbor's wife, defiling yourself with her.

NET   You must not have sexual intercourse with the wife of your fellow citizen to become unclean with her.

NLT   Do not defile yourself by having sexual intercourse with your neighbor's wife.

MSG   Don't have sex with your neighbor's wife and violate yourself by her.

BBE   And you may not have sex relations with your neighbor's wife, making yourself unclean with her.

NKJV   Moreover you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor's wife, to defile yourself with her.

NRSV   You shall not have sexual relations with your kinsman's wife, and defile yourself with her.

KJV   Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her.

None of the translations make a serious attempt to deal with the idiom.

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
Literal: All knees run   water
ESV   All hands are feeble, and all knees turn to water
HCSB   All their hands will become weak, and all ₌their₎ knees will 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

<center>The text is not euphemistic</center>

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

52

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.

Another passage which raises a similar issue is Isaiah 7:20. The Lord is sending Assyria to shave Judah, to shave the hair of their head and the hair of their legs. Most translations stick with the literal "legs" or "feet". Two interpret "pubic hair" (NET) and genitals (MSG). NLT bails out: "shave off everything: your land, your crops, and your people."

A reverse euphemism of sorts is when the scribes take a personal name that contains the name of a heathen god and change the name to something derogatory. The most common example is Ishbaal to Ishbosheth (shame). The name of the god Marduk in Babylonian names is changed to Merodach. In Isaiah 39:1 NIV11 is the only translation to "correct" it back to Marduk.

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 in public. 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 in which the 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, the euphemism "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. [38]

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*.'"

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." This destroys the more subtle nature of the Song. 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.

A very interesting and difficult example of euphemism is found in Genesis 19:5. The Sodomites come to seize Lot's guests. They demand:

ESV   Bring them out to us, that we may know them.
NIV   Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.
HCSB Send them out to us so we can have sex with them!
NASB Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them."
NLT   Bring them out to us so we can have sex with them!"
MSG   Bring them out so we can have our sport with them!
BBE   Send them out to us, so that we may take our pleasure with them.
NKJV Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally.

---

[38] Other examples of such euphemistic substitution: 1) men forcefully or lustfully *shagal* women; the scribes suggest "lie with" (Dt 28:30, Is 13:16, Ze 14:2, Je 3:2);   2) the besieged have to eat *cheri;* the scribes suggest we read: "decayed leaves" (2 Kg 6:25);   3) 2 Kg 10:27—latrine; The consonantal text (*kethib*) has the *hapax legomenon* מַחֲרָאוֹת (machara'ot), "places to defecate" or "dung houses" (note the related noun חרא (chr')/ חרי(chri), "dung," *HALOT* 348-49 s.v. *חֲרָאִים). The marginal reading (*qere*) glosses this, perhaps euphemistically, מוֹצָאוֹת (motsa'ot), "outhouses."
Other issues: Dt 28:27, 1 Sa 5:6,9,12, 6:4,5— hemorrhoids;   Dt 25:11—private parts or genitals.

NRSV Bring them out to us, so that we may know them.
KJV　Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.

Here the reality that the translator must deal with is that Moses, though he could have used an ugly or a neutral word for sex to express the Sodomite rapists' demand, he puts a euphemism into their mouths. The translators seem baffled about what to do.   The choices seem to be: stay literal, add an awkward explanation to the literal, or use an undynamic equivalent.

Which translation is best? Can you do better?

In Judges 5:30 Sisera's mother expects that her son and his men are delayed in their return from battle because from the plunder of Israel they have each received "a womb or two wombs". What is the connotation of this idiom?
　　　NIV　　a girl or two for each man
　　　NASB　a maiden, two maidens for every warrior
　　　HCSB　a girl or two for each warrior
　　　ESV　　a womb or two for every man
　　　NET　　a girl or two for each man to rape
　　　NLT　　a woman or two for every man.
　　　MSG　　a girl, maybe two girls, for each man
　　　BBE　　a young girl or two to every man
　　　NKJV　 to every man a girl or two
　　　NRSV　 a girl or two for every man
　　　KJV　　 to every man a damsel [or] two
Which translations reflect the idiom? Which ignore it?

In light of the contemporary situation an 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 for hire, or it could exclude committed relationships from the condemnation. "Effeminate" could refer to mannerisms rather than conduct. "Practicing homosexuals" is undoubtedly right in the context, but could it be used to imply that the sin is limited to deeds. ESV, HCSB, and NIV11 go 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:

55

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 person of his own sex, *pederast* …of one who assumes the dominant role in same-sex activity, opposite μαλακός".

Another passage is 1 Timothy 1:10 (πόρνοις   ἀρσενοκοίταις):

NIV84 adulterers and perverts,
NIV11 the sexually immoral, those practicing homosexuality,
ESV   the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality,
HCSB the sexually immoral and homosexuals,
NASB immoral men and homosexuals
NET   sexually immoral people, practicing homosexuals
NLT   people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality,
MSG   sex, truth, whatever!
BBE   those who go after loose women, those with unnatural desires,
NKJV for fornicators, for sodomites,
NRSV fornicators, sodomites,
KJV   for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind,

A Different Euphemism Issue

Translators also struggle with whether to euphemize references to God that are deemed too anthropomorphic. An example is in Psalm 90:2. The second Hebrew verb is often used for giving birth in pain. Can this be used of God?

NIV   Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
HCSB Before the mountains were born, before You gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, You are God.
ESV   Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
NET   Even before the mountains came into existence, or you brought the world into being, you were the eternal God.
NASB Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.
NLT   Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from beginning to end, you are God.
MSG   long before the mountains were born, Long before you brought earth itself to birth, from "once upon a time" to "kingdom come"—you are God.
BBE   Before the mountains were made, before you had given birth to the earth and the world, before time was, and forever, you are God.
NKJV Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.
NRSV Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

KJV   Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou [art] God.

In Deuteronomy 5:9 is God a jealous God? A zealous God? Which translations give the best explanation? Is an explanation needed?

NET   You must not worship or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. I punish the sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons for the sin of the fathers who reject me,

NIV   You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

ESV   You shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

NASB   You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

NLT   You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.

MSG   Don't bow down to them and don't serve them because I am GOD, your God, and I'm a most jealous God. I hold parents responsible for any sins they pass on to their children to the third, and yes, even to the fourth generation.

BBE   You may not go down on your faces before them or give them worship: for I, the Lord your God, am a God who will not give his honor to another; and I will send punishment on the children for the wrongdoing of their fathers, to the third and fourth generation of my haters;

NKJV   you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

NRSV   You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me,

KJV   Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God [am] a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth [generation] of them that hate me,

There is surprising little variation here.

Does God "repent" or "change his mind"? 1 Samuel 15:11 and 29 say both that he does and does not *nacham*.

NIV   I am grieved that I have made Saul king
NIV11 I regret that I have made Saul king
ESV   I regret that I have made Saul king
HCSB I regret that I made Saul king
NET   I regret that I have made Saul king
NASB I regret that I have made Saul king
NLT   I am sorry that I ever made Saul king
MSG   I'm sorry I ever made Saul king

BBE   It is no longer my pleasure for Saul to be king
NKJV I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king
NRSV I regret that I made Saul king,
KJV   It repenteth me that I have set up Saul [to be] king:

NIV   He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind;
NASB the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind;
ESV   the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret,
HCSB the Eternal One of Israel does not lie or change His mind,
NET   The Preeminent One of Israel does not go back on his word or change his mind,
NLT   he who is the Glory of Israel will not lie, nor will he change his mind,
MSG   Israel's God-of-Glory doesn't deceive and he doesn't dither. He says what he means and means what he says.
BBE   the Glory of Israel will not say what is false, and his purpose may not be changed:
NKJV the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent.
NRSV the Glory of Israel will not recant or change his mind;
KJV   the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent :

In Job 2:9, in Hebrew Job's wife tells him to "bless God and die". The context seems to require "curse God and die". All the English translations I checked "correct" the Hebrew and translate "curse God and die."

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 our base translations opt for capital Spirit in the main text, except for the Message, which expresses its dissent with style. (The other issue in this passage 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 versus non-deity or of Messianic versus 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 per se as a device for marking Messianic prophecy or for distinguishing direct from typical prophecy. (This will be discussed more under the point on prophecy.)

In 1 John 2:18 John refers to the many antichrists who had already arrived and to the one great Antichrist who would come. For the great Antichrist the Greek has the word *antichristos* without an article and of course with no capital letter. What is the best way to translate this into English?

NIV   Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.

HCSB   Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.

NASB   Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared.

ESV   Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.

NET   Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared.

NLT   Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared.

MSG   Children, time is just about up. You heard that Antichrist is coming. Well, they're all over the place, antichrists everywhere you look.

BBE   Little children, it is the last hour; and as you were given word that the Antichrist would come, so now a number of Antichrists have come to you;

NKJV   Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come.

NRSV   Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.

KJV   Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists.

Better   you have heard that Antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come.

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 capitalized "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 (compare the example from Mark in point 6 above). It is not so simple to break up the long strings of 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 showing connections such as paragraphing and dashes, but preserving the author's connection of thoughts should take priority over too rigid an enforcement of short sentences. Clarity of connections is a greater priority. [39]

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

>> 1 *Paul*, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.|||| 5 Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake. |||| 6 And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. |||| 7 *To all in Rome* who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: *Grace and peace* to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

> It is hard to see what has been gained here. The hardest part of the chain (v 1-4) is left intact. Furthermore, the first sentence (v 1-4) is not a sentence; it is a fragment. Verse 6 is a simple independent sentence starting with "And".   And verse 7 needs the first word of verse one yield its complete sense. Is the ESV with its one sentence harder to understand? If there is a perceived need for manageable bites, the guys who put the verse numbers in already provided that.

>> 1 *Paul*, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh 4 and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, 6 including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, 7 *To all those in Rome* who are loved by God and called to be saints: *Grace to you and peace* from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

> 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.

---

[39] 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 reproduce the effect of special word order in Hebrew, but it can reproduce the effect in some other way. For example, if the Hebrew word order is emphatic, the emphasis can be produced by some other device in English.

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.[40]   Faulkner didn't write the way he did because he lacked understanding of the craft of writing. He used long sentences and 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 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?"

In Job 1:6 the narrator chooses to call the angels "sons of God". Is there any reason not to respect his decision?

    NET   Now the day came when the sons of God came to present themselves before
             the Lord – and Satan also arrived among them.
    NIV   One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan
             also came with them.
    NASB Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before
             the LORD, and Satan also came among them.
    ESV   Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves
             before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.
    HCSB One day the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and
             Satan also came with them.
    NLT   One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves
             before the Lord, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them.
    MSG   One day when the angels came to report to GOD, Satan, who was the
             Designated Accuser, came along with them.
    BBE   there was a day when the sons of the gods came together before the Lord, and
             the Satan came with them.
    NKJV Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves
             before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

---

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

NRSV One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the LORD,
        and Satan also came among them.

KJV   Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves
        before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

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 me 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"
    HCSB Jesus responded, "I assure 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. In Matthew 5:22 *raca* is an Aramaic word retained in a Greek text, so a good case may be made for retaining it as KJV and NIV do and providing a footnote giving the meaning.

As long as we are on the subject, did Jesus speak Aramaic, Hebrew, or both? More specifically was the title on the cross Hebrew or Aramaic? In John19:20, John uses the Greek word εβραιστι, but some of our translations (NIV, ESV, and NET) translate εβραιστι as "Aramaic" rather than as "Hebrew". We know that Jesus spoke Aramaic in daily life (*abba,*

talitha qum). But if the evangelist chose the word εβραιστι, do we have the right to change it to "Aramaic"? The same issue occurs in the book of Acts.[41]

That raises another issue. Should translators try to retro-translate the Greek New Testament into Aramaic to solve exegetical questions, or should they stick with the Greek? Some Roman Catholics argue that since *petros* and *petra* would be the same word in Aramaic, Peter must be the rock on which the church is built. Aside from the fact that this claim is questionable, the Greek is the inspired text.

What if the Greek has linguistic resources which did not exist in the Aramaic? An example occurs in John 21:15-17 where, in their exchange, Peter and Jesus use two different words for love (ἀγαπάω and φιλέω). Aramaic does not have this distinction of vocables for love, but could have made a distinction between degrees of love in some other way. The translator has to make his decision here on the basis of the Greek. Aside from Origen, who saw a distinction in the meaning of the two words, most of the Greek Fathers saw no real difference of meaning. Neither did Augustine nor the translators of the Old Latin. This was also the view of the Reformation Greek scholars. The suggestion that a distinction in meaning should be seen comes primarily from a number of British scholars of the 19th century. It has been picked up by others, but most modern scholars decline to see a real difference in the meaning of the two words in this context.[42] Of our translations, BBE attempts to differentiate:

> Then when they had taken food, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, is your love for me greater than the love of these others? He said to him, Yes, Lord; you are certain of my love for you. He said to him, Then give my lambs food. Again, a second time, he said to him, Simon, son of John, have you any love for me? Yes, Lord, he said, you are certain of my love for you. Then take care of my sheep, said Jesus. He said to him a third time, Simon, son of John, am I dear to you? Now Peter was troubled in his heart because he put the question a third time, Am I dear to you? And he said to him, Lord, you have knowledge of all things; you see that you are dear to me. Jesus said to him, Then give my sheep food.

A variation of this neglect of the style of the Hebrew text 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.

---

[41] For a discussion see Kittel, *TDOTNT,* III, p 365-369, 388-391. See also John 5:2, Revelation 9:11, Revelation 16:16, Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14.
[42] See the extensive note in NET Bible.

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. [43]

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?

2 Peter 1:4   What does it mean that we "fellowship", "partake", or "commune" in the divine nature? Does this refer to the mystic union? Or to our new nature?
    NIV   you may participate in the divine nature
    ESV   you may become partakers of the divine nature
    HCSB you may share in the divine nature
    NET   you may become partakers of the divine nature,
    NASB you may become partakers of the divine nature
    NLT   the promises that enable you to share his divine nature
    MSG   your tickets to participation in the life of God
    BBE   we might have our part in God's being
    NKJV you may be partakers of the divine nature
    NRSV may become participants of the divine nature
    KJV   ye might be partakers of the divine nature
Most translations are literal and non-committal. Which interpretations flirt with danger? How?

Here is another example of the Spirit/spirit issue with whole lot more problems thrown in for good measure. The variants make this passage a candidate for further study. Note Holman's indecision.

    James 4:5
    HCSB do you think it's without reason the Scripture says
          that the Spirit who lives in us yearns jealously   or
          He who caused the Spirit to live in us yearns jealously,   or
          the spirit He caused to live in us yearns jealously,   or
          He jealously yearns for the Spirit He made to live in us.
    ESV   He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us
    NIV   the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely
    NASB He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us?
    NLT   the spirit God has placed within us is filled with envy?
    MSG   do you suppose God doesn't care? The proverb has it that "he's a fiercely jealous
          lover."
    BBE   The spirit which God put into our hearts has a strong desire for us
    NKJV The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously
    NRSV God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us
    KJV   The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy

---

[43] Translators' should not use footnotes everytime they can't make up their mind which translation they like best. Footnotes should be reserved for significant alternatives or significant textual variants.

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

> HCSB They, like Adam, have violated the covenant;
>   Or *they, as at Adam*, or *they, like men*
> 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. [44] The third option "at Adam" assumes a change from *k* to *b*. 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.

An example that touches on messianic interpretation is Haggai 2:7. Does this refer to Christ coming to the nations or the nations coming to Christ?

וְהִרְעַשְׁתִּי֙ אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִ֔ם וּבָ֖אוּ חֶמְדַּ֣ת כָּל־הַגּוֹיִ֑ם

> NIV84 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come,
> NIV11 I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come,
> HCSB   I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come,
> ESV   I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in
> NASB   I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations,
> NET   I will also shake up all the nations, and they will offer their treasures
> MSG   I'll shake down all the godless nations. They'll bring bushels of wealth
> NRSV   I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come
> KJV   I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come
> NKJV   I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations
>
> Do any of the renderings keep both possibilities? Does the context point toward one?

A minor example that illustrates the principle is found in Ezekiel 1:1.

> NIV84   In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day, while I was among the
>   exiles by the Kebar River, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God.
> ESV   In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month
> NASB   Now it came about in the thirtieth year, on the fifth day of the fourth month
> NIV11   In my thirtieth year, in the fourth month on the fifth day
> NLT   On July 31 of my thirtieth year
> MSG   When I was thirty years of age

"My thirtieth year" may very well be correct, but it provides information Ezekiel chose not to provide.

---

[44] Other passages that may lend themselves to "sons of Adam": Ps 90:3 , Ps ll:4, Ps 89:7, 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?

> NET   Each one of you is seizing the collateral from your own countrymen!
> NIV   You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!
> NASB You are exacting usury, each from his brother!
> HCSB You are exacting usury from your own countrymen!
> ESV   You are exacting interest, each from his brother.
> NLT   You are hurting your own relatives by charging interest when they borrow money!
> MSG   Each one of you is gouging his brother.
> BBE   Every one of you is taking interest from his countryman.
> NKJV Each of you is exacting usury from his brother.
> NRSV You are all taking interest from your own people.
> KJV   Ye exact usury, every one of his brother.
> How about "exacting interest"?

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 at the one end, 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.

<center>Man</center>

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.
> HCSB   So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him;
>   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.

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.
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.

NIV84   [God] wants all men to be saved
NIV11   [God] wants all people to be saved
HCSB   [God] wants everyone 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.

James 1:7 and 8 seems to be a case in which *anthropos* and *aner* could be interchangeable, "That person (*anthropos*) should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person (*aner*) is double-minded and unstable in all they do." Or should we say, "Such people are double-minded and unstable in all they do"?

In Ephesians 2:15 is there one new man or one new humanity?
NIV84 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His
       purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,
HCSB   He made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations,
       so that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace.
ESV   by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in
       himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,
NASB   by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained
       in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus
       establishing peace,
NET   when he nullified in his flesh the law of commandments in decrees. He did this to
       create in himself one new man out of two, thus making peace,
NLT   He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He
       made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from
       the two groups.
MSG   He repealed the law code that had become so clogged with fine print and footnotes
       that it hindered more than it helped. Then he started over. Instead of continuing with
       two groups of people separated by centuries of animosity and suspicion, he created a
       new kind of human being, a fresh start for everybody.
BBE   Having in his flesh put an end to that which made the division between us, even the
       law with its rules and orders, so that he might make in himself, of the two, one new
       man, so making peace;

NKJV having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is , the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

NRSV He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,

KJV Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, [even] the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, [so] making peace;

<p style="text-align:center;">Everyone/they</p>

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 ("Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.") the translators 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."[45] "Everyone was in their shorts" is correct but not without its unclarities. [46] 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 efforts to deal with the masculine singular.

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.

HCSB If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him
and have dinner with him, and he with Me.

NRSV If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and
eat with you, and you with me.

Another issue here is whether "anyone" and "everyone" can be treated the same, or is "anyone" more singular than "everyone"?

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

---

[45] 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."

[46] 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.

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. [47]

<div align="center">

The General Issue of
Attention to Number and Gender

</div>

There are other instances, not directly related to the gender neutral issue, in which it would be good if translations would more carefully observe number and gender. In John 1:11, for example, John says that Jesus came to his own things (τα ιδια) and his own people (οι ιδιοι) did not receive him. Some translations observe the gender distinction, others do not.

Clear distinction of neuter and masculine
NET   He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him.
BBE   He came to the things which were his and his people did not take him to their hearts.
NRSV He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.

Less Clear
NIV   He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.
ESV   He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.
NASB He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.
NKJV He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
KJV   He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

No distinction is made
NLT   He came to his own people, and even they rejected him.
MSG   He came to his own people, but they didn't want him.

<div align="center">

The Number of God

</div>

A special problem with singular or plural arises from the Hebrew idiom of using *elohim*, a plural which normally means "gods", to refer to the one true God. This is sometimes called a "majestic plural". When the Philistines hear that the Ark of the Covenant has arrived in Israel's camp, they say, "*Elohim* has come into the camp" (1 Samuel 4:7) How should this be translated?

NIV   "A god has come into the camp"
ESV   "A god has come into the camp."
HCSB "The gods have entered their camp!"
NET   they thought that gods had come to the camp.
NLT   "The gods have come into their camp!"
MSG   "Their gods have come to their camp!
NASB "God has come into the camp."
BBE   God has come into their tents.
NKJV "God has come into the camp!"
NRSV "Gods have come into the camp."
KJV   God is come into the camp.

---

[47] 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.

A similar issue exists in the story of the Golden Calf.

<div align="center">Additional Examples of Gender Issues</div>

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
> NIV84   the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac
> NIV11   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".

A parallel case is found in Amos 2:11

> NIV84 I also raised up prophets from among your sons and Nazirites from
>   among your young men.
> ESV   I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young
>   men for Nazirites
> NASB I raised up some of your sons to be prophets And some of your young
>   men to be Nazirites.
> MSG   I raised up some of your young men to be prophets, set aside your best
>   youth for training in holiness.
> BBE   some of your sons I made prophets, and some of your young men I
>   made separate for myself.
> NKJV I raised up some of your sons as prophets, And some of your young
>   men as Nazirites.
> NRSV I raised up some of your children to be prophets and some of your
>   youths to be nazirites.
> NIV11 I also raised up prophets from among your children and Nazirites from
>   among your youths.

> The Hebrew word which NIV 2011 translates as "youth" (*bachurim*) means "young
> men". It often contrasts with *betuloth,* "virgins".

What about when the issue is inspiration of the prophets?

> 2 Peter 1:21
> NIV84 prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they
>   were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
> NIV11 prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human,
>   spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
> HCSB no prophecy ever came by the will of man; instead, men spoke from God as they
>   were moved by the Holy Spirit.

ESV   no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

NASB no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

NET   no prophecy was ever borne of human impulse; rather, men carried along by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

NLT   nor from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.

MSG   it's not something concocted in the human heart. Prophecy resulted when the Holy Spirit prompted men and women to speak God's Word.

BBE   For these words did not ever come through the impulse of men: but the prophets had them from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

NKJV prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

NRSV no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

KJV   prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Which are good, which are not?

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 the literal: "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 which 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,[48] 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.

The opposite case of trying to avoid sexual stereotypes is in 1 Corinthians 16:13.

NIV84 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.

NIV11 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong

HCSB Be alert, stand firm in the faith, act like a man, be strong.

NASB Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

ESV   Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

NET   Stay alert, stand firm in the faith, show courage, be strong.

MSG   Keep your eyes open, hold tight to your convictions, give it all you've got, be resolute,

BBE   Be on the watch, unmoved in the faith, and be strong like men.

NKJV Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

---

[48] In Is 3:12 NIV retains "women". Only NET emends away from it.

NRSV   Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.
KJV   Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.

Is manliness obsolete?

Who was to prepare to go up Mt. Sinai at the giving of the law, all Israelites or just the men?

Exodus 19:15
NIV   Then he said to the people, "Prepare yourselves for the third day. Abstain from sexual relations."
NASB He said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."
ESV   And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not go near a woman."
NLT   He told them, "Get ready for the third day, and until then abstain from having sexual intercourse."
MSG   Then he addressed the people: "Be ready in three days. Don't sleep with a woman."
BBE   And he said to the people, Be ready by the third day: do not come near a woman.
NKJV And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives."
NRSV And he said to the people, "Prepare for the third day; do not go near a woman."
KJV   And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at [your] wives.

In the Ten Commandments the pronouns are masculine singular. Did Israelite women conclude that the commandments did not apply to them? Did the women think the 9th and 10th commandments against coveting did not apply to them?

Another passage which raises the issue of comparison of the sexes is 1 Peter 3:7:

Greek living together according to knowledge, as to the weaker, female vessel
ESV   showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel
NIV   treat them with respect as the weaker partner

HCSB live with your wives with an understanding of their weaker nature
NASB as with someone weaker, since she is a woman

NLT   Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life.
MSG   Be good husbands to your wives. Honor them, delight in them. As women they lack some of your advantages. But in the new life of God's grace, you're equals. Treat your wives, then, as equals so your prayers don't run aground.

BBE   giving honor to the woman who is the feebler vessel
NRSV paying honor to the woman as the weaker sex
KJV   giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel

What is the point here? It seems most likely Peter is referring primarily to the physical burdens that come to the woman in child-bearing. "Vessel" refers to the body in its sexual and reproductive use. Those who translate literally leave interpretation to the interpreter. Those who try to explain how the woman is weaker may give offense which the text did not give. NLT and MSG editorialize.

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 adopted by the ESV destroys the parallel between man and woman in the following verses.

Complications

This issue is complicated by the fact that gender issues and issues of social status overlap and become entangled. We have an example of this in Luke 22:56-58. The text calls the female person who confronts Peter in the courtyard a girl (παιδισκη). Does this reflect her age or her social status?[49] Seemingly, the latter. Peter calls her "woman" (γυναι) when he addresses her. In contemporary informal English we could call her "lady", but this would hardly work in the 1st century, would it? In the next confrontation Peter addresses a male person of undetermined social status as *anthrope*, which all translations render as "man". Why did Peter call the guy an *anthropos* rather than an *aner?* In contemporary English when is it acceptable to address a group of 30-ish female persons as "girls"? When is it not acceptable? When is it acceptable to address an African-American male as "boy"? When is it not?

A similar issue of social tone arises when Jesus addresses his mother as "woman" (John 2:4). This sounds disrespectful to some. Such English alternatives as "lady", "ma'am", and "madame" have their own issues. Most translations stick with the literal "woman" (ESV, NET, NASB, BBE, NKJV, KJV). NIV & NLT try a fix, "dear woman". MSG corrects Jesus so that his words say, "Is that any of our business, Mother—yours or mine? This isn't my time. Don't push me." Jesus' point here seems to be that Mary can't claim special status as his mother, so the fixes blur the point.[50]

A parallel issue in the Old Testament is whether some Hebrew words for "man" are more manly, whether *ish* regularly has a higher connotation than *enosh?* NIV thinks it does. I don't.

In John 21:5 Jesus calls out to the disciples who are offshore in a boat, "Children" (παιδία). Most translations are content to stay with the literal "children". NIV interprets as "friends". MSG has "Good morning". HCSB has "men". Wouldn't the English dynamic equivalent be "Hey, boys"?

Humans or Men?

---

[49] Somewhat parallel would be the English use of "maid".
[50] The same issue occurs in John 20: 13, 15 with Mary Magdalene. Translations seem less concerned to fix that one.

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".

An example of a passage in which almost all of our base translations chose "children" rather than "sons" as the translation for *banim* is 1 Chronicles 28:8. Although inheritance was normally passed through sons, all of our translations except NASB refer to a permanent inheritance for their children rather than for their sons. Why? NIV and Holman have "descendants". Why?

Galatians 3: 26 is an 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.
HCSB 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?

Another important example is Galatian 4:4-6. Here the issue is whether "sonship" has the connotation of adoption to full privileges of the family.

NIV84 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

NIV11   to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *"Abba*, Father."

ESV   to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

HCSB   to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, *"Abba*, Father!

NASB   that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

NET   to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights.   And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls "Abba! Father!"

NLT   so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."

MSG   thus we have been set free to experience our rightful heritage. You can tell for sure that you are now fully adopted as his own children because God sent the Spirit of his Son into our lives crying out, "Papa! Father!"

BBE   that we might be given the place of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, saying, Abba, Father.

NKJV   to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

NRSV   so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

KJV   we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

A case in which "sons" is not a good translation is Luke 20:34. It is clear that the group include both men who marry and women who are given in marriage.

ESV   And Jesus said to them, The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage
NASB Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage."
BBE   And Jesus said to them, The sons of this world are married and have wives

NKJV And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in
         marriage."
NET   So Jesus said to them, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage."
NIV   Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage."
NLT   Jesus replied, "Marriage is for people here on earth.
MSG   Jesus said, "Marriage is a major preoccupation here
NRSV Jesus said to them, "Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage;
KJV   And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given
         in marriage :

"Sons" has another peculiar use. "Sons of" refers to people of a certain type, "son of perdition," a
person doomed to destruction. In these cases should the idiom be retained? The same idiom
occurs with "children"(*tekna*) in Ephesians 2:5.

NET   by nature children of wrath
NIV   by nature objects of wrath.
NASB   by nature children of wrath
ESV   by nature children of wrath
NLT   subject to God's anger
MSG   it's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us.
BBE   the punishment of God was waiting for us
NKJV   by nature children of wrath
NRSV   by nature children of wrath
KJV   by nature the children of wrath, even as others

<div align="center">Brothers/Sisters</div>

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", אָחִיךָ הָעִבְרִי אֹו הָעִבְרִיָּה). 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 in some contexts, and *adelphoi* is not strictly equivalent to the English "brothers
and sisters" or "siblings" since those expressions 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 which use "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 in

naming the traitors it uses the inclusive word "parents" for father and mother, but then uses the more exclusive term "brothers" in what may be a reference to male and female siblings: You will even be betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends (ὑπὸ γονέων καὶ ἀδελφῶν καὶ συγγενῶν καὶ φίλων). Only NIV 2011 included the sisters in this verse. See a similar pairing in Matthew 12:49-50: Here are my mother and my brothers! [50] For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, that person is my brother and sister and mother." Here "sister" is made explicit in the second reference.

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 the term "brothers" is intended to address both the males and females who may have been 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 NIV 2011 renders *adelphoi as* "brothers and sisters" and describes these brothers and sisters as those who proclaim the gospel. Is this implying that both 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" an 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". [51] It is very likely women were present, but were they asked to participate in the selection of the apostle?

Acts 22:1 has the triple masculine ανδρες αδελφοι και πατερες for which all the translations retain the masculine.

Is there really any reason for NIV 2011 to remove "brothers" from Deuteronomy 18:15, the prophecy of the coming prophets and Prophet? "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites."

NIV 2011 seems committed to eliminating "brothers" even when most others retain it.

Nehemiah 4:14
NIV84   fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.
NIV11   fight for your people, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."
NRSV   fight for your kin, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes." [52]

A Complication

---

[51] The LSB version of the ESV has this dubious translation in a note.

[52] Other passages to consider: 3 John 3; 1 John 2:9; 1 Peter 3:8; James 3:1; Hebrews 2:11, 12, 17; James 1:8-9.

A complication in handling such situations of inclusive "men" and inclusive "brothers" occurs when the writer chooses to use the masculine term "man" or "brother" and then makes his own specification that the term is inclusive. An example occurs in Exodus 25 and 35. In Exodus 25 the gift bringers are "every willing man". In Exodus 35:22 the gift bringers are again "every willing man", but this time Moses specifies that this includes women in addition to men or more precisely men in addition to women (הָאֲנָשִׁים עַל־הַנָּשִׁים).

NIV   All who were willing, men and women alike,
NASB Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women,
ESV   So they came, both men and women. All who were of a willing heart
NET   They came, men and women alike, all who had willing hearts.
NLT   Both men and women came, all whose hearts were willing.
MSG   They came, both men and women, all the willing spirits among them,
BBE   They came, men and women, all who were ready to give,
NKJV   They came, both men and women, as many as had a willing heart,
NRSV   So they came, both men and women; all who were of a willing
KJV   And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted

All of the translations ignore the fact that the expression in Hebrew is "men on/after the women," meaning men as well as women. The expression is not a simple co-ordination. Does it imply that the men came after the women because the latter had taken the initiative or simply that since the gifts listed immediately after this statement are jewelry, women were likely the chief donors.

A Peculiar Case

A different sort of gender issue occurs in Judges 11:31 where the decision for the translator is masculine, feminine, or neuter? Jephthah promises to sacrifice "the coming out one" (היוצא). Is this whoever or whatever comes out of his house?

       NRSV NET BBE   whoever
       NIV NASB ESV NLT MSG NKJV KJV   whatever
What is wrong with the translation "whoever"?
What is wrong with the translation "whatever"?
How about "the first one to come out of my house"?

Conclusion

The gender issue requires a paper of its own. 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 the 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?

Joel 1:8   אֱלִי כִּבְתוּלָה חֲגֻרַת־שַׂק עַל־בַּעַל נְעוּרֶיהָ
ESV   Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.

NIV84 Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the husband of her youth.
NIV11 Mourn like a virgin in sackcloth grieving for the betrothed of her youth.
HCSB   Grieve like a young woman dressed in sackcloth, ₍mourning₎ for the husband of her youth.
NASB   Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.
NET   Wail like a young virgin clothed in sackcloth, lamenting the death of her husband-to-be.
NLT   Weep like a bride dressed in black, mourning the death of her husband.
MSG   Weep like a young virgin dressed in black, mourning the loss of her fiancé.
BBE   Make sounds of grief like a virgin dressed in haircloth for the husband of her early years.
NKJV   Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.
NRSV   Lament like a virgin dressed in sackcloth for the husband of her youth.
KJV   Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

Evaluate NIV84, NIV11, and ESV. An additional issue here is that the husband is caller her lord.

Deuteronomy 20:7

NET   Or who among you has become engaged to a woman but has not married her? He may go home, lest he die in battle and someone else marry her.
NIV   Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her.
ESV   And is there any man who has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her.
BBE   Or if any man is newly married and has had no sex relations with his wife, let him go back to his house, so that in the event of his death in the fight, another man may not take her.
HCSB   Has any man become engaged to a woman and not married her? Let him leave and return home. Otherwise he may die in battle and another man marry her.
NASB   And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.
NLT   Has anyone here just become engaged to a woman but not yet married her? Well, you may go home and get married! You might die in the battle, and someone else would marry her.
MSG   Is there a man here engaged to marry who hasn't yet taken his wife? Let him go home right now lest he die in battle and another man take her.
NKJV   And what man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.
NRSV   Has anyone become engaged to a woman but not yet married her? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another marry her.
KJV   And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her

Compare especially NIV and BBE to understand the problem.

Matthew 1:18

NIV   His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

NASB   when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she
       was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

ESV   When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she
       was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

NLT   His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took
       place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the
       Holy Spirit.

MSG   His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. Before they came to the
       marriage bed, Joseph discovered she was pregnant. (It was by the Holy Spirit, but he
       didn't know that.)

BBE   When his mother Mary was going to be married to Joseph, before they came together
       the discovery was made that she was with child by the Holy Spirit.

NKJV   After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was
       found with child of the Holy Spirit.

NRSV   When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together,
       she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

KJV   When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was
       found with child of the Holy Ghost.

What are the pros and cons of "married," "engaged", and "betrothed"?

How does social status and polygamy affect the issue? In Exodus 21:4 is the female slave whom a
master gives to his male slave to bear children by him that slaves's "wife" or his "woman"? Was
Hagar Abraham's wife? Were Bilah and Zilpah wives?

A problem term is *pilegesh,* usually translated "concubine", but what is a concubine? In Judges
19:1 all our translations translate *pilegesh* "concubine" except BBE which has "servant-wife".
The KJV adds the note: Hebrew—"a woman a concubine, or a wife a concubine". Was a
concubine a wife? Dictionaries say a concubine may be either a woman cohabits with a man
without being married to him or a secondary wife with fewer legal rights and a lower social status
than a full wife. Is concubine an adequate translation? Do you have something better?

Another example of a cultural issue that is tricky for the translator is legitimacy of birth. The
mamzer appears only twice in Scripture (Dt 23:2, Zech 9:6) and translators struggle with it.

NIV   No-one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the
       assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.

ESV   No one born of a forbidden union may enter the assembly of the LORD. Even
       to the tenth generation, none of his descendants may enter the assembly of the
       LORD.

HCSB   No one of illegitimate birth may enter the LORD's assembly; none of his
       descendants, even to the tenth generation, may enter the LORD's assembly.

NASB   No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of
       his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the
       LORD.

NLT   If a person is illegitimate by birth, neither he nor his descendants for ten
       generations may be admitted to the assembly of the Lord.

MSG   No bastard is to enter the congregation of GOD, even to the tenth generation,
       nor any of his children.

BBE   One whose father and mother are not married may not come into the meeting
       of the Lord's people, or any of his family to the tenth generation.

NKJV One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the LORD; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the LORD.

NRSV Those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

KJV A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

Of all of these translations it seems that only ESV and NRSV are correct. Children of unmarried Jewish parents are not illegitimate as long as those parents would be suitable subjects for marriage (so "bastard" and "illegitimate" are misleading to English readers). Only children born of the adultery of a married woman or from an incestuous marriage or relationship are *mamzer* (so the term "forbidden marriage" is too narrow). The Zechariah reference seems to include offspring from marriages or relationships with women from forbidden nations as does Deuteronomy 23:3. The translator's problem is to understand and communicate the cultural institution in terms his reader will understand.[53]

<p style="text-align:center">Side Issues</p>

Some family terms are ambiguous. In Mark 3:21 "the ones next to him," (οἱ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ) is a disputed term. "When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" Some translators shy away from the translation "family" apparently because they do not want Jesus' family to call him insane, but we know his brothers were opponents of this ministry (John 7). His brothers appear at the end of this chapter. In Mark 4:10 "those around him" are Jesus' associates. In Luke 1:58 "those living around" are neighbors rather than relatives. There seems to be a good argument here for "family" but perhaps extended family.

NIV ESV, NLT, NET, NRSV	His family
KJV MSG BBE	His friends
NASB NKJV	His own people
Which do you like and why?	

So who was Hobab, the חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה? Is *choten* father-in-law, brother-in-law, or is either possible?

Judges 4:11:

NET, NASB ESV NKJV NRSV KJV, HCSB	Hobab, Moses' father-in-law
NIV NLT BBE	Hobab, Moses' brother-in-law
MSG	Hobab, Moses' in-law

See also Numbers 10:29: חֹבָב בֶּן־רְעוּאֵל הַמִּדְיָנִי חֹתֵן מֹשֶׁה

In the Old Testament there is also a problem with the terms for organizational levels of the family. Are the terms which are commonly translated "tribe" really parallel to the term "tribe" in

<hr/>

[53] A different sort of "political correctness" or "cultural sensitivity" is raised by John's use of the term "the Jews" to refer to Jesus's encounters with his contemporaries. John, himself a Jew, uses the same term whether the encounter is hostile or friendly. In John 9:22, where the encounter is hostile, NET and NLT change "the Jews" to "the Jewish religious leaders" to avoid alleged anti-semiticism. In John 11:19, where the encounter is friendly, NET has "the Jewish people of the region" and NLT has "many of the people".

anthropology? What is a *mishpachah*? A clan? An extended family? What is the house of his fathers? What is the house of his father?

Numbers 1:2 & 4   כָּל־עֲדַת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם

NET   Take a census of the entire Israelite community by their clans and families

NIV   Take a census of the whole Israelite community by their clans and families

ESV   Take a census of all the congregation of the people of Israel, by clans, by fathers' houses.

NASB   Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' households

NLT   From the whole community of Israel, record the names of all the warriors by their clans and families

MSG   Number the congregation of the People of Israel by clans and families

BBE   Take the full number of the children of Israel, by their families, and by their fathers' houses

NKJV   Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel, by their families, by their fathers' houses

NRSV   Take a census of the whole congregation of Israelites, in their clans, by ancestral houses

KJV   Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, after their families, by the house of their fathers

אִישׁ אִישׁ לַמַּטֶּה אִישׁ רֹאשׁ לְבֵית־אֲבֹתָיו

NIV   One man from each tribe, each the head of his family, is to help you.

NASB   With you, moreover, there shall be a man of each tribe, each one head of his father's household.

ESV   And there shall be with you a man from each tribe, each man being the head of the house of his fathers.

NET   And to help you there is to be a man from each tribe, each man the head of his family.

NLT   and you will be assisted by one family leader from each tribe.

MSG   Pick one man from each tribe who is head of his family to help you.

BBE   And to give you help, take one man from every tribe, the head of his father's house.

NKJV   And with you there shall be a man from every tribe, each one the head of his father's house.

NRSV   A man from each tribe shall be with you, each man the head of his ancestral house.

KJV   And with you there shall be a man of every tribe; every one head of the house of his father.

Joshua 21:1: literally, "the heads of the fathers' of the Levites"

NIV   the family heads of the Levites

NASB the heads of households of the Levites

NET   the tribal leaders of the Levites

ESV   the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites

NLT   the leaders of the tribe of Levi

MSG   the ancestral heads of the Levites

BBE   the heads of the families of the Levites

NKJV the heads of the fathers' houses of the Levites

NRSV the heads of the families of the Levites

KJV   the heads of the fathers of the Levites

Another office that comes into question when discussing gender issues is "apostle". Could women be apostles and if so, what kind of apostles? In Romans 16:7 there are three issues. Is the person in question male (Junias) or female (Junia)? Is the person a highly regarded apostle or highly regarded by the apostles (some recent research supports this)? What kind of apostle are we talking about?

Romans 16:7 ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις

NIV84   Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

NASB   Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

MSG   Hello to my cousins Andronicus and Junias. We once shared a jail cell. They were believers in Christ before I was. Both of them are outstanding leaders

NIV11   Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

HCSB   Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

ESV   Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

NET   Greet Andronicus and Junia, my compatriots and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me.

NLT   Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did.

BBE   Give my love to Andronicus and Junia, my relations, who were in prison with me, who are noted among the Apostles, and who were in Christ before me.

NKJV   Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

NRSV   Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

KJV   Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

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,[54] so 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"

---

[54] A supplemental paper "The Principles and Practices of Bible Translation Applied to Prophecy" is available in the WLS online essay file as of late June 2012. This contains more examples of this issue.

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.
3) Prophecies with an 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.

NIV84   The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son
NIV11   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[55]
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.

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?

Zechariah 12:8 is another example of the capitalization issue with Angel of the Lord.

NIV84   the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them.

---

[55] Maiden (*Magd*) means either virgin or young woman.

NIV11   the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD going before them.
ESV   the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them.
NASB   the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.
NLT   the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the Lord who goes before
            them!
MSG   the family of David itself will be godlike, like the Angel of GOD leading the people.
NET   the dynasty of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them. [1]
            [1]This is hyperbole about the king.
BBE   the family of David will be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.
NKJV   the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.
NRSV   the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, at their head.
KJV   the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.
Differences of style or differences of interpretation?

Even more striking is Zechariah 3:1:

NIV   Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the
            LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.
NASB   Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the
            LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
ESV   Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the
            LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
NLT   Then the angel showed me Jeshua the high priest standing before the angel of
            the Lord. The Accuser, Satan, was there at the angel's right hand, making
            accusations against Jeshua.
MSG   Next the Messenger-Angel showed me the high priest Joshua. He was
            standing before GOD's Angel where the Accuser showed up to accuse him.
BBE   And he let me see Joshua, the high priest, in his place before the angel of the
            Lord, and the Satan at his right hand ready to take up a cause against him.
NKJV   Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the
            LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.
NRSV   Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the
            LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
KJV   And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD,
            and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.
Why do so many capitalize *the satan* and so few capitalize *the malak Adonai?*[56]   In
Matthew 4:5 on the other hand, only HCSB and MSG capitalize the Devil.

Isaiah 4:2 offers a striking example of capitalization issues.

NIV   In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of
            the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.
NASB   In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the
            earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.
NKJV   In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; And the fruit of
            the earth shall be excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped.

---

[56] This is true also of most of the other Angel of the Lord passages. See also Exodus 33:14.

MSG   And that's when GOD's Branch will sprout green and lush. The produce of the country will give Israel's survivors something to be proud of again. Oh, they'll hold their heads high!

ESV   In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.

NLT   But in that day, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of all who survive in Israel.

NET   At that time the crops given by the Lord will bring admiration and honor; the produce of the land will be a source of pride and delight to those who remain in Israel.

BBE   In that day will the young growth of the Lord be beautiful in glory, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride of those who are still living in Israel.

NRSV On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.

KJV   In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

Many English versions understand the phrase צֶמַח יְהוָה as a messianic reference and render it, "the Branch of the Lord".   In favor of this translation is the fact that צֶמַח is used by later prophets of a coming king (Jer 23;5 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12). Against this view is the parallelism, which suggests that this prophecy views the blessed prosperity of God's people during the messianic era rather than the person of the Messiah. None of the translations which capitalize Branch capitalize the second member of the parallelism.

Isaiah 11:1 provides a similar issue of inconsistency of capitalization.

ESV   There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

NASB Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

NET   A shoot will grow out of Jesse's root stock, a bud will sprout from his roots.

BBE   And there will come a rod out of the broken tree of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots will give fruit.

NRSV A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

NIV   A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

NLT   Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot— yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.

KJV   And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

NKJV There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

MSG   A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump, from his roots a budding Branch.

The issue here is whether "shoot" and "branch" are titles or figurative terms. Some strongly messianic translations do not capitalize them.   It would seem consistency would suggest capitalizing both or neither.

Isaiah 11:10—here the same issue applies to "root".

NIV   In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

NASB   Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

ESV   In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

NET   At that time a root from Jesse will stand like a signal flag for the nations. Nations will look to him for guidance, and his residence will be majestic.

NLT   In that day the heir to David's throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.

MSG   On that day, Jesse's Root will be raised high, posted as a rallying banner for the peoples. The nations will all come to him. His headquarters will be glorious.

BBE   And in that day, the eyes of the nations will be turned to the root of Jesse which will be lifted up as the flag of the peoples; and his resting-place will be glory.

NKJV   And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious."

NRSV   On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

KJV   And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

This is another illustration of why capitalization is not a very good method of trying to identify prophecy.

Micah 2:13—the Breaker was recognized as a Messianic title by the Jews.

NIV84   One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head

NIV11   The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head.

HCSB   One who breaks open ₁the way₎ will advance before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and leave by it. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD as their leader.

NASB   The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it.

NET   The one who can break through barriers will lead them out they will break out, pass through the gate, and leave.

ESV   He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it.

NLT   Your leader will break out and lead you out of exile, out through the gates of the enemy cities, back to your own land.

MSG   Then I, GOD, will burst all confinements and lead them out into the open. They'll follow their King. I will be out in front leading them."

BBE   The opener of the way will go up before them: forcing their way out they will go on to the doorway and out through it: their king will go on before them, and the Lord at their head.

NKJV   The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it;

NRSV The one who breaks out will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it.

KJV The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it:

Surprisingly, NIV11 adds capitalization that NIV84 did not have. HCSB is the only other capitalizer. MSG does capitalize King.

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.

There are a number of lesser issues in verse 16. Since the pronouns indicate that the king is now being addressed, how do translations reflect this? Since the issue is dynastic succession why change away from fathers and sons? Does he appoint rulers throughout the land or throughout the earth?

NIV Your sons will take the place of your fathers; you will make them princes throughout the land.

NASB In place of your fathers will be your sons; You shall make them princes in all the earth.

ESV In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.

NLT Your sons will become kings like their father. You will make them rulers over many lands.

MSG "Set your mind now on sons—don't dote on father and grandfather. You'll set your sons up as princes all over the earth.

BBE Your children will take the place of your fathers; so that you may make them rulers over all the earth.

NKJV Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, Whom You shall make princes in all the earth.

NET Your sons will carry on the dynasty of your ancestors; you will make them princes throughout the land. Note: "Your" is masculine.

NRSV In the place of ancestors you, O king, shall have sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.

KJV   Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all
          the earth.

Which translations omit "fathers and sons"? Which reflect the gender of the person being addressed?

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 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 NIV 2011 appear to see only typical prophecy in the Old Testament [57] 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. [58]

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 34:30 blur the connection with John 19:36? This would apply whether the prophecy is typical or direct.

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.

---

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

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 NIV 1984 and 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.

In Jeremiah 31:22, NIV 2011 eliminates the patristic messianic interpretation as an allusion to the virgin birth. NIV 1984 and ESV are neutral. It is not clear from the context that this is in fact a messianic prophecy.

NIV 1984 How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter? The LORD will create a new thing on earth—a woman will surround a man.
NIV 2011 How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter? The LORD will create a new thing on earth—a woman will return to the man. (or protect)

NASB	How long will you go here and there, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth—A woman will encompass a man.
ESV	How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created new thing on the earth: a woman encircles a man.
NLT	How long will you wander, my wayward daughter? For the Lord will cause something new to happen— Israel will embrace her God."
MSG	How long will you flit here and there, indecisive? How long before you make up your fickle mind? GOD will create a new thing in this land: A transformed woman will embrace the transforming GOD!"
BBE	How long will you go on turning this way and that, O wandering daughter? for the Lord has made a new thing on the earth, a woman changed into a man.

In Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16 the NIV 2011 rendering weakens the traditional Lutheran understanding that the text refers to Christ as "the Lord our Righteousness." ESV is not better. Again, the grammar is not decisive here.

NIV 1984	This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.
NIV 2011	This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.
NASB	This is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.'
ESV	This is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'
MSG	The motto for the city will be, "GOD Has Set Things Right for Us."
BBE	This the name which will be given to her: The Lord is our righteousness.
NKJV	This is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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?

Another test case is Psalm 22:16.

NIV   they have pierced my hands and my feet
ESV   they have pierced my hands and feet
NASB they pierced my hands and my feet
NLT   they have pierced my hands and feet
NKJV   They pierced My hands and My feet
MSG   they pin me down hand and foot
BBE   they made wounds in my hands and feet
NRSV my hands and feet have shriveled
NET   like a lion they pin my hands and feet
In this case the Masoretic text has "like a lion", but only NET follows this.

A difficult prophecy which translators wrestle with is Genesis 49:10.

NET   The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; the nations will obey him.
NIV   The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.
NASB The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
ESV   The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
NLT   The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor.
MSG   The scepter shall not leave Judah; he'll keep a firm grip on the command staff Until the ultimate ruler comes and the nations obey him.
BBE   The rod of authority will not be taken from Judah, and he will not be without a law-giver, till he comes who has the right to it, and the peoples will put themselves under his rule.
NKJV The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.
NRSV The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the obedience of the peoples is his.
KJV   The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him [shall] the gathering of the people [be].
Are some of these translations more messianic than others? How about Luther's *bis dass der Held komme?*

How do translations view the nature of faith in the Messiah?

NET   the person of integrity will live because of his faithfulness.
NIV   the righteous will live by his faith—
NASB   the righteous will live by his faith.
ESV   the righteous shall live by his faith.
NLT   the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.
MSG   the person in right standing before God through loyal and steady believing is fully alive, [really] alive.
BBE   the upright man will have life through his good faith.
NKJV   the just shall live by his faith.
NRSV   the righteous live by their faith.
KJV   the just shall live by his faith.

Compare Romans 1:16

NET   The righteous by faith will live.
NIV   The righteous will live by faith."
NASB   THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.
ESV   The righteous shall live by faith.
NLT   It is through faith that a righteous person has life.
MSG   The person in right standing before God by trusting him really lives.
BBE   The man who does righteousness will be living by his faith.
NKJV   The just shall live by faith.
NRSV   The one who is righteous will live by faith.
KJV   The just shall live by faith.

Any interesting translations here?

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, the Lord." In any case this is a moot issue, because if Eve was intending to refer to the Messiah, she was wrong.

18. Sometimes there is no clear solution to translating the text, and the translator simply has to take his best shot and move on.

It would be easy to come up with dozens of examples just from the book of Job in which translators after millennia of study are not able to reach consensus on the meaning of the passage. Tradition, however, has usually winnowed the suggestions to two to four main options. We will look at just a couple of examples.

In Job 39:13 the Hebrew text seems to say "the wing of loud singers is joyous if pious pinions and plumage." More than twenty solutions have been suggested. Most start by taking the "wing of loud singers" as a name for the ostrich, and "pious", "loving", or "merciful" (*chasidah*) as the name of the stork. The following verses seem to describe an ostrich, so this is a good guess. Three main trends emerge.

NIV   The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork. Essentially followed by NET, NLT, HCSB. NKJV adds a nice touch with the addition of *kindly* to the translation of *chasidah*: "like the kindly stork".

ESV   The wings of the ostrich wave proudly, but are they the pinions and plumage of love? Essentially followed by NASB. A guess based on the ostrich's reputed neglect of its young.

NRSV The ostrich's wings flap wildly, though its pinions lack plumage.
MSG   The ostrich flaps her wings futilely—all those beautiful feathers, but useless!
BBE   Is the wing of the ostrich feeble, or is it because she has no feathers,

KJV Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks ? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?   Hmm? Birds of different feather?
Douay-Rheims Bible   The wing of the ostrich is like the wings of the heron, and of the hawk. Following the Vulgate tradition.

Can any of these claim to be more than guesses from the context? Reasonable guesses, but guesses nonetheless.

In Job 42:11 his guests give him a *qesitah* and a gold nose ring. What is a *qesitah*?

NIV   a piece of silver. Followed by NET, NKJV.
ESV   a piece of money. Followed by NASB, BBE, NRSV, and KJV.
HCSB a *qesitah*.
MSG   generous housewarming gifts.

The text does not have "silver" but the context suggests it. "Money" suggests coinage which was still far in the future. The *qesitah* seems to be a unit of weight used in patriarchal times. Since we don't know what it is, transliteration is not a bad choice.

Of the notorious difficulties in Job none in more important than Job 19:26, "I know that my Redeemer lives." Here in spite of great difficulties tradition seems to have solidified. Only BBE bucks the trend in order to deny the allusion to resurrection of the body. Even NRSV backpedals from RSV.

NIV   after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;
ESV   after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God,
NET   after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God,
NASB Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;
NLT   after my body has decayed, yet in my body I will see God!
MSG   I'll see him—even though I get skinned alive!—
NRSV after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God,
BBE …without my flesh I will see God;
NKJV   after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,
KJV   though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:
            or**,** After I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh**…**

What is the translator to do when the biblical text as we have received it seems to be wrong?

In Jeremiah 31:33 all our translations take the Hebrew as singular and refer to God placing his *law* into his people's hearts. In this context *torah* refers to the gospel. In Hebrews 8:10 the Greek translation of Jeremiah has "laws" giving the text a possible legalistic bent. In the NT all our translations honor the Greek text and keep the plural "laws", except:

MSG This time I'm writing out the plan in them, carving it on the lining of their
        hearts. I'll be their God, they'll be my people.

In 2 Chronicles 16:1 we are told, "In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah." Since other data makes it clear that Baasha died in Asa's 26th year, readers will notice a problem. It is commonly assumed the text is corrupt here (the suggested emendation is "sixteenth year"), but there is no manuscript evidence to support this correction, so all our test translations stick with "the thirty-sixth year" and leave it up to the study Bibles to sort it out.

Tarshish is a place in the western Mediterranean. "Ships of Tarshish" are ships designed by the Phoenicians to sail there, but such ships could also sail to Ophir or Sheba on the Red Sea. In 2

Chronicles 20:37 the text seems to say that ships sail to Tarshish on the Red Sea (לָלֶכֶת אֶל־תַּרְשִׁישׁ:).
Some translations correct the presumed error; others do not.

NIV	The ships were wrecked and were not able to set sail to trade.
NET	The ships were wrecked and unable to go to sea.
NLT	So the ships met with disaster and never put out to sea.
MSG	The ships were smashed and nothing ever came of the trade partnership.
BBE	And the ships were broken and were not able to go to Tarshish.
KJV	And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.
NKJV	Then the ships were wrecked, so that they were not able to go to Tarshish.
NRSV	And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.
NASB	So the ships were broken and could not go to Tarshish.
ESV	And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.
HCSB	So the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

19. 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, HCSB, 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 a few test cases.

    * The most notorious case 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.)

    * 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.

* Luke 22:43-44 is bracketed in some translations such as NET and HCSB. NIV retains these verses with a note that they are missing from many early manuscripts.

> [[43]Then an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. [44]Being in anguish, He prayed more fervently, and His sweat became like drops of blood falling to the ground.]

* A large omission is the pericope about the adulterous woman at the beginning of John 8. Concerning this section the translator's note of the NET says, "This entire section, 7:53-8:11,traditionally known as the *pericope adulterae*, is not contained in the earliest and best mss and was almost certainly not an original part of the Gospel of John. Among modern commentators and textual critics, it is a foregone conclusion that the section is not original but represents a later addition to the text of the Gospel." In spite of this conclusion the NET says, "Double brackets have been placed around this passage to indicate that most likely it was not part of the original text of the Gospel of John. In spite of this, the passage has an important role in the history of the transmission of the text, so it has been included in the translation. Here is how the text is handled in TEC's three top-rated translations.

Holman has the text in brackets with the note: Other mss omit bracketed text.

ESV has the heading: THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS DO NOT INCLUDE 7:53–8:11, and the additional note: Some manuscripts do not include 7:53–8:11; others add the passage here or after 7:36 or after 21:25 or after Luke 21:38, with variations in the text.

NIV 2011 has the note: The earliest manuscripts and many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53–8:11. A few manuscripts include these verses, wholly or in part, after John 7:36, John 21:25, Luke 21:38 or Luke 24:53.

* Perhaps the most discussed large omission from the text is the end of Mark's gospel. Again, NET has a very extensive translators' note for those who want to pursue the matter. After a detailed list of the textual evidence it concludes:

> Indeed, the strange variety of dissimilar endings attests to the probability that early copyists had a copy of Mark that ended at v. 8, and they filled out the text with what seemed to be an appropriate conclusion. All of the witnesses for alternative endings to vv. 9-20 thus indirectly confirm the Gospel as ending at v. 8. … Double brackets have been placed around this passage to indicate that most likely it was not part of the original text of the Gospel of Mark. In spite of this, the passage has an important role in the history of the transmission of the text, so it has been included in the translation.

> NIV84—the text is set off by a bar above it and a footnote says: The earliest manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20.

> NIV11—the text is set off by a bar above it and an in-text heading says: "The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9–20", and the text of v 9-20 is italicized. Thus the argument for omission is highlighted.

> ESV has the text in double brackets with this headline: [SOME OF THE EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS DO NOT INCLUDE 16:9–20.]. It also has this footnote:
> Some manuscripts end the book with 16:8; others include verses 9–20 immediately after verse 8. At least one manuscript inserts additional material after verse 14; some manuscripts include after verse 8 the following: *But they reported briefly to Peter and those with him all that they had been told. And after this, Jesus himself sent out by means of them, from east to west, the sacred and imperishable proclamation of eternal salvation*. These manuscripts then continue with verses 9–20.

> HCSB has the text in single brackets with the note: *Other mss omit bracketed text*.

This ending does have considerable early (pre-6th century) and widespread manuscript support, so the case for omission on manuscript grounds is by no means one-sided. Those who favor omission rely heavily on the earliness of Aleph and Sinaiticus, but earlier is not necessarily better, as is apparent in a comparison of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic Text.

Another textual issue that may be emotional for some is the text of the Lord's Prayer, or should we say the Lord's prayers. There are two versions, one in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 and the other in a lesson on prayer in Luke 12. In the UBS text both versions are significantly shorter than the version in the King James Bible and our liturgical version. Both versions lack the doxology and the version in Luke lacks some petitions. This is how three recent versions handle the issue.

> HCSB And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
> [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]
> Note: Other mss omit bracketed text.
> KJV and NKJV have the doxology without brackets. NASB with brackets.

ESV   And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
      Notes: Or *the evil one*;
          some manuscripts add *For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*

NIV11 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
      Notes: Or *from evil*;
      some late manuscripts: *one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

Since there is considerable textual and patristic evidence that the doxology is a liturgical addition to the prayer, I would follow the approach of the ESV. The confessional version of Luther's Small Catechism does not include the Doxology.

Conclusion

What would I prefer as a guideline concerning the text to be used in a translation? 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.

Old Testament

In the Old Testament the situation is complicated by the difference in the textual resources. There are far fewer Old Testament resources. There are few instances of major additions or subtractions from the Hebrew Text, similar to the ending of Mark or the pericope of the adulterous woman.[59] One such addition that has received attention lately in the beginning of 1 Samuel 11.   A Qumran manuscript, 4QSam[a], and Josephus (*Ant.* 6.68-71) attest to a major addition which explains Nahash's practice of mutilating his enemies and in this way provides a smoother transition to the following paragraph than is found in the MT.

> Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead."

NET comments: "This reading should not be lightly dismissed; it may in fact provide a text superior to that of the MT and the ancient versions. But the external evidence for it is so limited as to induce caution; the present translation instead follows the MT. However, for a case for including this reading in the text see the discussions in P. K. McCarter, *I Samuel* (AB), p 199, and R. W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (WBC), p 103." Of the translations I examined, only NRSV follows the long reading. NIV 2011 has it in a note.

---

[59] I am not dealing here with the abbreviated texts of Jeremiah and Job in the LXX.

In 1 Samuel 6:19 the Hebrew text says the Lord struck "seventy men, fifty thousand men" for looking into the ark. This does not seem like a reasonable number so translations adjust in various ways.

NIV	God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh, putting seventy of them to death
HCSB	He struck down 70 men ⌊out of⌋ 50,000 men.
NASB	He struck down of all the people, 50,070 men
ESV	He struck seventy men of them
NLT	But the Lord killed seventy men from Beth-shemesh
MSG	Seventy died.
BBE	the Lord sent destruction on seventy men of the people of Beth-shemesh
NRSV	The descendants of Jeconiah did not rejoice with the people of Beth-shemesh when they greeted the ark of the LORD; and he killed seventy men of them.
NET	he struck down 50,070 of the men.
NKJV	He struck fifty thousand and seventy men of the people
KJV	he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men

NET comments: The number 50,070 is surprisingly large, although it finds almost unanimous textual support in the MT and in the ancient versions. Only a few medieval Hebrew mss lack "50,000," reading simply "70" instead. However, there does not seem to be sufficient external evidence to warrant reading 70 rather than 50,070, although that is done by a number of recent translations (e.g., NAB, NIV, NRSV, NLT). The present translation (reluctantly) follows the MT and the ancient versions here.

In 1 Samuel 13:1, the Hebrew text gives the numerals for measuring Saul's reign as one year and two years. These numbers seem to be defective. Translations try to fix the problem by supplying ages for Saul and duration of his reign suggested by context or by other sources (LXX—30; Acts 13:21—forty).

NIV	Saul was [thirty] years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel for [forty] two years.
ESV	Saul was . . . years old when he began to reign, and he reigned . . . and two years over Israel.
HCSB	Saul was 30 years old when he became king, and he reigned 42 years over Israel.
NLT	Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty-two years.
NASB	Saul was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty two years over Israel.
NET	Saul was [thirty] years old when he began to reign; he ruled over Israel for [forty] years.
MSG	Saul was a young man when he began as king. He was king over Israel for many years.
BBE	***
NKJV	Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,
NRSV	Saul was…years old when he began to reign; and he reigned…and two years over Israel.
KJV	Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

In 2 Samuel 21:19 there seems to be an obvious copying error. The Hebrew text reads, "Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite." This obviously contradict the well-known story of David killing Goliath. Proposed solutions include identifying David with Elhanan or positing the existence of two Goliaths. But the problem is probably textual. The copyist misread the

word for "brother" (אָח) as the accusative sign (אֶת). The parallel passage in 1 Chr 20:5 reads, "Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath." Thus in all probability the original text read, "Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath."

These translations leave the main text uncorrected:
NIV84　Elhanan son of Jaare-Oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite,
ESV　　Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite
HCSB　Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite.
NASB　Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite,
MSG　　Elhanan son of Jaar, the weaver of Bethlehem, killed Goliath the Gittite.
BBE　　Elhanan, the son of Jair the Beth-lehemite, put to death Goliath the Gittite.
NRSV　Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, killed Goliath the Gittite

These texts correct the Hebrew in the main text:
NIV11　Elhanan son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite,
NET　　Elhanan the son of Jair the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite,
NLT　　Elhanan son of Jair from Bethlehem killed the brother of Goliath of Gath.
NKJV　Elhanan the son of Jaare–Oregim the Bethlehemite killed the brother of Goliath the Gittite
KJV　　Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew [the brother of] Goliath the Gittite

Anything surprise you in these lists? This text and its parallel in Chronicles have a load of other problems and would be a good textual study for a translation committee.

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. Three examples will illustrate the issue.

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

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 no 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.
```

In Proverbs 22:20 some recent translations emend the Hebrew text on the basis of an Egyptian literary parallel. The Hebrew Qere has "excellent things." The Ketiv has "the day before yesterday". The Egyptian parallel has "thirty".

```
KJV    Have not I written to thee excellent things,
NKJV   Have I not written to you excellent things,
NASB   Have I not written to you excellent things,
NET    Have I not written thirty sayings for you,
NIV    Have I not written thirty sayings for you,
ESV    Have I not written for you thirty sayings
NLT    I have written thirty sayings for you,
MSG    I'm giving you thirty sterling principles.
BBE    Have I not put in writing for you thirty sayings,
NRSV   Have I not written for you thirty sayings,
```

Conclusions

1) Translating is hard work, especially when a foreign language is involved.[60]
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 real 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 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.

---

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

13) The translator's second greatest attribute is a feeling for the language and communication style of the original texts.
14) The translator's third most important aptitude is a feeling for the English language.
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: the Textual Basis of ESV, NIV, HCSB and NKJV

These are basically the versions' own statement of their textual basis.

The ESV is based on the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible as found in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (2nd ed., 1983), and on the Greek text in the 1993 editions of the *Greek New Testament* (4th corrected ed.), published by the United Bible Societies (UBS), and *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.), edited by Nestle and Aland. The currently renewed respect among Old Testament scholars for the Masoretic text is reflected in the ESV's attempt, wherever possible, to translate difficult Hebrew passages as they stand in the Masoretic text rather than resorting to emendations or to finding an alternative reading in the ancient versions. In exceptional, difficult cases, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and other sources were consulted to shed possible light on the text, or, if necessary, to support a divergence from the Masoretic text. Similarly, in a few difficult cases in the New Testament, the ESV has followed a Greek text different from the text given preference in the UBS/Nestle-Aland 27th edition.

For the NIV, in the Old Testament the standard Hebrew text, the Masoretic Text as published in the latest editions of *Biblia Hebraica*, was used throughout. The Dead Sea Scrolls…were consulted, as were the Samaritan Pentateuch and the ancient scribal traditions relating to textual changes. Sometimes a variant Hebrew reading in the margin of the Masoretic Text was followed instead of the text itself. Such instances, being variants within the Masoretic tradition, are not specified by footnotes. In rare cases, words in the consonantal text were divided differently from the way they appear in the Masoretic Text. Footnotes indicate this. The translators also consulted the more important early versions - the Septuagint; Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion; the Vulgate; the Syriac Peshitta; the Targums; and for the Psalms the *Juxta Hebraica* of Jerome. The manuscript base of the NIV New Testament was the Koine Greek language editions of the United Bible Societies and of Nestle-Aland

Textual base of the *HCSB:* The textual base for the New Testament is the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition, and the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament*, 4th corrected edition. The text for the Old Testament is the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia,* 5th edition.Where there are significant differences among Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts of the OT or among Greek manuscripts of the NT, the translators have followed what they believe is the original reading and have indicated the main alternative(s) in footnotes. The HCSB uses the traditional verse divisions found in most Protestant Bibles.

According to the preface of the New King James Version (p. v-vi), the NKJV uses the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of the *Biblia Hebraica* for the Old Testament, with frequent comparisons made to the Ben Hayyim edition of the *Mikraot Gedolot* published by Bomberg in 1524–25, which was used for the King James Version. Both the Old Testament text of the NKJV and that of the KJV come from the ben Asher tradtion (known as the Masoretic Text). However, the 1967/1977 Stuttgart edition of the *Biblia Hebraica* used by the NKJV uses an earlier manuscript (the Leningrad Manuscript B19a) than that of the KJV.

The New King James Version uses the *Textus Receptus* ("Received Text") for the New Testament, just as the original King James Version had used. *Textus Receptus* (Latin: "received text") is the name subsequently given to the succession of printed Greek texts of the New Testament which constituted the translation base for the original German Luther Bible and the King James Version. The series originated with the first printed Greek New Testament to be published; a work undertaken by the Dutch Catholic scholar and humanist Desiderius Erasmus in 1516, on the basis of some six manuscripts, containing between them not quite the whole of the New Testament. The lacking text was translated from Vulgate. Although based mainly on late manuscripts of the Byzantine text-type, Erasmus's edition differed markedly from the classic form of that text. Erasmus adjusted the text in many places to correspond with readings found in the Vulgate, or as quoted in the church fathers. Consequently, although the *Textus Receptus* is classified by scholars as a late Byzantine text, it differs in nearly two thousand readings from the standard form of that text-type, as represented by the "Majority Text" of Hodges and Farstad. In other words, there is no invariable "majority text."

Appendix B: 1 John 5:7

> "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."

The infamous *Comma Johanneum*, has been known in the English-speaking world through the King James translation. Before τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα the *Textus Receptus* (*TR*) reads ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὁ πατήρ, ὁ λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἕν εἰσι. καὶ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῇ ("in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth"). However, the evidence – both external and internal – is decidedly against its authenticity. For a detailed discussion, see *TCGNT,* p 647-49. Our discussion will briefly address the external evidence. This longer reading is found only in nine late mss, four of which have the words in a marginal note. Most of these mss (221 2318 [18th century] {2473 [dated 1634]} and [with minor variations] 61 88 429 629 636 918) originate from the 16th century; the earliest ms, codex 221 (10th century) includes the reading in a marginal note, added sometime after the original composition. The oldest ms with the *Comma* in its *text* is from the 14th century (629), but the wording here departs from all the other mss in several places. The next oldest mss on behalf of the *Comma*, 88 (12th century) 429 (14th) 636 (15th), also have the reading only as a marginal note (*v.l.*). The remaining mss are from the 16th to 18th centuries. Thus, there is no sure evidence of this reading in any Greek ms until the 14th century (629), and that ms deviates from all others in its wording; the wording that matches what is found in the *TR* was apparently composed after Erasmus' Greek NT was published in 1516. Indeed, the *Comma* appears in no Greek witness of any kind (either ms, patristic, or Greek translation of some other version) until a.d. 1215 (in a Greek translation of the Acts of the Lateran Council, a work originally written in Latin).

This is all the more significant since many a Greek Father would have loved such a reading, for it so succinctly affirms the doctrine of the Trinity. The reading seems to have arisen in a 4th century Latin homily in which the text was allegorized to refer to members of the Trinity. From there, it made its way into copies of the Latin Vulgate, the text used by the Roman Catholic Church. The Trinitarian formula (known as the *Comma Johanneum*) made its way into the third edition of Erasmus' Greek NT (1522) because of pressure from the Catholic Church. After his first edition appeared, there arose such a furor over the absence of the *Comma* that Erasmus needed to defend himself. He argued that he did not put in the *Comma* because he found no Greek mss that included it. Once one was produced (codex 61, written in ca. 1520), Erasmus apparently felt obliged to include the reading. He became

aware of this ms sometime between May of 1520 and September of 1521. In his annotations to his third edition he does not protest the rendering now in his text, as though it were made to order; but he does defend himself from the charge of indolence, noting that he had taken care to find whatever mss he could for the production of his text. In the final analysis, Erasmus probably altered the text because of politico-theologico-economic concerns: He did not want his reputation ruined, nor his *Novum Testamentum* to go unsold.

Modern advocates of the *TR* and KJV generally argue for the inclusion of the *Comma Johanneum* on the basis of heretical motivation by scribes who did not include it. But these same scribes elsewhere include thoroughly orthodox readings – even in places where the *TR*/Byzantine mss lack them. Further, these advocates argue theologically from the position of divine preservation: Since this verse is in the *TR*, it must be original. (Of course, this approach is circular, presupposing as it does that the *TR* = the original text.) In reality, the issue is history, not heresy: How can one argue that the *Comma Johanneum* goes back to the original text yet does not appear until the 14th century in any Greek mss (and that form is significantly different from what is printed in the *TR*; the wording of the *TR* is not found in any Greek mss until the 16th century)? Such a stance does not do justice to the gospel: Faith must be rooted in history.

Significantly, the German translation of Luther was based on Erasmus' second edition (1519) and lacked the Comma. But the KJV translators, basing their work principally on Theodore Beza's 10th edition of the Greek NT (1598), a work which itself was fundamentally based on Erasmus' third and later editions (and Stephanus' editions), popularized the Comma for the English-speaking world. Thus, the Comma Johanneum has been a battleground for English-speaking Christians more than for others.

Based on the extensive textual note of NET. Read with discrimination.

<div align="center">Luther on the Comma</div>

In Luther's Table Talk (No. 7101) Luther comments on the *Comma:*

> I and others believe that it is sort of added, that it is added by some ignoramus. We do not want, however, to translate it because of the word "testimony," because in heaven there will be no need for a testimony. . .as it is written: "we will see God face to face. " There, the Trinity will declare Himself. WA 48: 688,15-20 (N0.7101).

From his comments on 1 John:

> This verse seems to have been inserted by the Catholics because of the Arians, yet not aptly.   LW 30: 316.

Luther did not include this verse in his Bible. It was included after his death over the protests of Bugenhagen. See *CTQ* October, 1985, p 245-252/

Appendix C: John 3:13

Most witnesses, including some classified as "important ones" (A[*] Θ Ψ 050 Ë[1,13] Ï latt sy[c,p,h]), have at the end of this verse "the one who is in heaven" (ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ). A few others have variations on this phrase, such as "who was in heaven" (e sy[c]), or "the one who is from heaven" (0141 *pc* sy[s]). The witnesses normally considered to be the best by many modern text critics do not have the verse (𝔓[66,75] אB L T W[s] 083 086 33 1241 *pc* co). On the one hand, if the reading ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is

authentic it may suggest that while Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus he spoke of himself as in heaven even while he was on earth. If that is the case, one could see why variations from this hard saying arose: "who *was* in heaven," "the one who is *from* heaven," and omission of the clause. At the same time, such a saying could be interpreted (though with difficulty) as part of the narrator's comments rather than Jesus' statement to Nicodemus, alleviating the problem. And if v. 13 was viewed in early times as the evangelist's statement, "the one who is in heaven" could have crept into the text through a marginal note. Other internal evidence suggests that this saying may be authentic. The adjectival participle, ὁ ὤν, is used in the Fourth Gospel more than any other NT book (though the Apocalypse comes in a close second), and frequently with reference to Jesus (1:18; 6:46; 8:47). It may be looking back to the LXX of Exod 3:14 (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν). Especially since this exact construction is not necessary to communicate the location of the Son of Man, its presence in many witnesses here may suggest authenticity. Further, John uses the singular of οὐρανός ("heaven") in all 18 instances of the word in this Gospel, and all but twice with the article (only 1:32 and 6:58 are anarthrous, and even in the latter there is significant testimony to the article). At the same time, many critics claim that the witnesses that lack this clause are very weighty and must not be discounted. ~~Generally speaking, if other factors are equal, the reading of such mss should be preferred.~~ And internally, it could be argued that ὁ ὤν is the most concise way to speak of the Son of Man in heaven *at that time* (without the participle the point would be more ambiguous). Further, the articular singular οὐρανός is already used twice in this verse, thus sufficiently prompting scribes to add the same in the longer reading. ~~This combination of factors suggests that ὁ ὤν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ is not a genuine Johannism.~~ Further intrinsic evidence against the longer reading relates to the evangelist's purposes: If he intended v. 13 to be his own comments rather than Jesus' statement, his switch back to Jesus' words in v. 14 (for the lifting up of the Son of Man is still seen as in the future) seems inexplicable. ~~The reading "who is in heaven" thus seems to be too hard. All things considered, as intriguing as the longer reading is, it seems almost surely to have been a marginal gloss added inadvertently to the text in the process of transmission.~~ (Based on the note of the NET, modified by JB)

For an argument in favor of the longer reading, see David Alan Black, "The Text of John 3:13," *GTJ* 6 (1985): p 49-66, and John Brug, *WLQ,* Spring, 1996, p 140-141.

Appendix D: Spelling Updates in the English Bible

Examples of spelling updates to the spelling of names in the Old Testament in successive versions of NIV are used to illustrate the issue.

NIV had already changed from the traditional forms of the KJV in quite a few names, especially replacing "ch" by "k" at the start of a name, as these names could easily be mispronounced according to the regular English pronunciation of "ch". For example, KJV "Chedorlaomer" (Gen 14:1) became NIV "Kedorlaomer", to avoid confusion with the cheese.

TNIV retained these new forms, but with some additions. "Ch" has been changed to "k" at the end of words where the sound is more like "kh", e.g. "Abimelech" > "Abimelek". Word-initial "c" has also been changed to "k", e.g. "Cabul" > "Kabul" (hopefully no one will take this as a reference to the capital of Afghanistan!). Also word-medial "c" replaces traditional "ch" (with the "kh" sound), e.g. "Achbor" (KJV), "Acbor" (NIV) > "Akbor". It seems that "c" remains in TNIV only in names which are considered too well known to change, e.g. "Zechariah".

Other changes in TNIV include 1) using historical forms of the names based on Akkadian rather than the Hebrew version: "Evil-Merodach" > "Awel-Marduk", "Erech" > "Uruk". 2) clarifications of pronunciation e.g. "Zeboiim" > "Zeboyim". 3) Some changes reflect translational preferences e.g.

"Jaakanites" > "Bene Jaakan"; "Kittim" > "Kittites"; "Mizraim" > "Egypt" (Genesis 10:6,13, 1 Chronicles 1:8,11).

These changes help with pronunciation. But there are many more similar changes which should be made for consistency. For example, most b's in Hebrew proper names have in fact always been pronounced *v*, but TNIV has only made one such change: "Abib" (the month) > "Aviv" – presumably to match "Tel Aviv" in Ezekiel 3:15 NIV, which was presumably itself so spelled to match the modern city in Israel. However, most existing *v*'s should probably be changed to *w*, as representing Hebrew *vav* ו which was pronounced *w* in biblical times. Similarly one could use *f* instead of *ph*.

One way to get a feeling for what is "in" in biblical spelling is to search alternate spellings in LOGOS. Some samples.

- Beth Shan or Bet Shean? The older sources tend to prefer the latter, while the newer works favor the former. Or for greater authenticity use Bet She'an.
- En Gedi or Ein Gedi? The former gets 1,700 hits and the latter 500.
- Succoth or Sukkoth? The former is the place name; the latter is the autumn feast.
- Beersheba or Beer Sheba?(The former gives 4,800 hits and the latter 3,700. Many Bible dictionaries prefer Beer-Sheba.) Or Beersheva?
- Elath, Elat, or Eilat?   The biblical name is the former (or Elat); the modern city is the latter.

Appendix E. Rubrics for Translators (in progress)

A sample of the kind of rubrics that a translation committee needs to develop. The list would be much more extensive than this and would be sorted into categories.

<div align="center">
More General Principles
Common Expressions
</div>

1. Translators will strive for a balance between preserving the original meaning and English which sounds natural, but preservation of meaning takes priority.
2. Translators will not strive for one "grade level" throughout the translation. The goal is that the level of difficulty of the translation should be similar to the level of difficulty of the original.
3. Keep basic idioms like "flesh", "walk with God", etc.
4. Where a pronoun is not close enough to its antecedent to fit English style, translators may replace it with the appropriate noun.
5. If a Hebrew or Greek idiom is redundant in English (stoned him with stones, a footstool for his feet), we will eliminate the redundancy.
6. Preserve heritage terms like sanctify, justify, angels, and saints, but not to the exclusion of "make holy" and "declare righteous", etc.
7. Normally avoid contractions except perhaps in casual speech.
8. We will not be too rigid about breaking up long sentences.
9. We don't have to keep all the *vav*s in Hebrew strings.
10. *Vav*s and *kai*s can be skipped sometimes,   but an effort should be made not to be careless about preserving connections. This can be done by paragraphing and other devices. "Ands" in the words of Jesus and other Semitic references can be treated with the flexibility of *vav*.
11. Participle shading.   Participles should be translated "with shading" as the appropriate kind of clause, unless the meaning is uncertain. In that case, the participle can be left as a participle.

12. "Saying" does not always need to be translated when it is like the Hebrew *lemor.* It often is not needed when the quotation is marked by quotation marks.
13. Use ancient monetary measurements except in idioms like "pay the last penny."
14. Use feet, pounds, gallons, etc., except when the ancient measure is necessary to the imagery.
15. Prefer the bare vocative, rather than O God, etc. (though "O God" is common and contemporary)
16. LORD for the Tetragrammaton. Lord for Adonai. Lord God for Adonai Elohim.
17. Keep "Christ" where the New Testament uses the Greek *christos.*
18. Use "law" for *torah* in most contexts.
19. Keep Ark of the Covenant, Tabernacle, and Temple and other traditional expressions.
20. Have a uniform translation for the names of animals, trees, gems, musical instruments, etc.
21. We need rubrics for changing spellings like Beersheva /Beersheba, Beth Shan/Beth She'an /Bet Shan, Acco/Akko. We will preserve traditional spellings like Tyre and Jerusalem even when they are not accurate to the Hebrew. For less known places we will adopt the newer spelling which try to more accurately indicate *kaph, qoph,* and *chet* and attempt to get closer to the Hebrew.
22. For personal names we will preserve distinctions like Peter and Cephas and Jehoiachin and Coniah. We will harmonize minor spelling changes and the different pre- and post-exilic names of individuals like Hezekiah. A problem case is Joash/Jehoash (2 Kg 12). Names like Joshua which appear in both the OT and NT will be harmonized to the most common English form. A case study for this is the genealogy in Matthew 1. See Appendix D for more information.
23. In the NT a fuller text than the UBS/Nestle can be weighed on a case by case. If words are restored to the main text, they should not be bracketed, but a note will state they are not in all manuscripts. Words that became very familiar in the KJV but which have very weak support can be put in footnotes with a brief explanatory note.

Individual Words

24. In psalms headings we will use *miktam* and *maskil.* For *mizmor* we will use "psalm".
25. We will keep the *selah*s or translate "interlude".
26. We will translate *kinnor* "lyre" and *nebel* "harp".
27. In the OT law were the workers servants or slaves? Are church workers servants or slaves of God? In the NT we can suggest "servant" or "minister" for *diakonos* and "slave" for *doulos* as a starting point, but in some contexts "servant" might be a better choice also for *doulos.* In the OT with *ebed* we will probably have to decide on a case by case basis.
28. Distinguish the temple sanctuary from the temple complex. Jesus never entered the temple itself. He often entered the temple courtyards.
29. Should we keep the term "womb"? If not, what will we substitute?
30. Is "virgins" retained even in contexts in which it sounds too technical in English? Are the virgins in Matthew 25:1 "bridesmaids"?
31. "Man" is the default translation for *ish* and *aner.*
32. Did the OT forbid "interest" or "usury"?
33. *Sar* will be translated "official" "minister" or "general" depending on context.
34. We will call Israel's neighbor to the North "Aram" and "Arameans".
35. Should *exousia* always be "authority", or is it "power" in some contexts?
36. Will *euangelion* vary between "gospel" and "good news"?
37. Generally, we will call the Sea of Galilee a sea even though it is a lake.
38. The translation for *hades* is "hell" when it refers to the place of the damned or is contrasted with heaven.
39. Emphatic words like *hineh* and *idou* will be reflected in the translation by such expressions as "look" "suddenly", and !.

40. Will *ethnoi* be Gentiles, nations, foreign nations, or heathen depending on the context? The default is "nations"; others may be suggested by context.
41. *Diatheke* will be translated "covenant" unless the context clearly indicates a will.
42. *Monogenes* "only begotten" or "one and only"?
43. Which or that? Depends on context.
44. Blessed vs happy for *makarios* and *ashrei*? Blessed is a fuller term than happy. Other Hebrew and Greek words carry the connotation happy.
45. What should we do with "scribes"? Experts in the law? Bible scholars? Scholars of the law?
46. Adonai Sebaoth= Lord of armies
47. Sikar=beer
48. Yah = Yah   Name is Yahweh.
49. Qere=Hebrew variant. Tiq soph= Hebrew scribal tradition

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 move NIV somewhat to the right. Also is the ESV really more word-for-word than the KJV? I would not call Living Bible and the Message dynamic equivalent translations—they are off the end of the arrow.
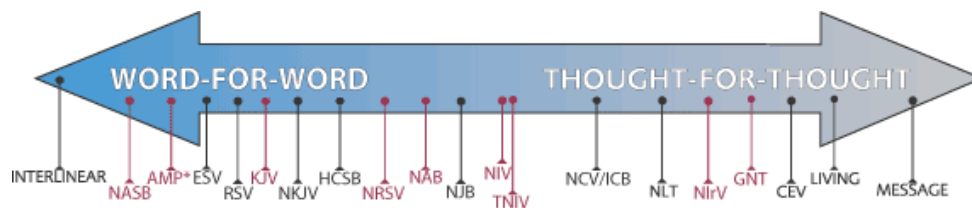
See http://www.tateville.com/translations.html for a conservative rating site. *Caveat lector*.

August 5, 2012 edition