# Theology  

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## Translating for Understanding

Russell H. BOWERS, Jr.

"We have here indeed what may very probably be the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos." ${ }^{\prime}$ What is this most complex of events? The replication of the DNA molecule? The interaction of subatomic particles? The courtship ritual of a rare jungle bird?

No, it is translation. So many obstacles threaten the process!
Communication consists of one person with an idea trying to replicate that idea-with all its particularities and nuances-in the mind of another. His idea bears neither size, shape, nor weight, but consists only of a flickering mental image. So the speaker must choose codes called "words" to represent it. Depending on how vivid his idea, and how vast his vocabulary and precise his syntax, he may or may not choose appropriate words. Then he must shape with his mouth the words chosen in his mind. But sometimes words stumble as they step

[^0]over tongue and teeth. Thus the words spoken may not match the words chosen.

Next, the hearer must take in precisely what the speaker has sent out. But if a sudden noise interrupts or the hearer's attention wanders, he might miss what was said. "Three" may be heard as "tree" or "free" or "thirty." Even if the correct word is heard, the hearer may assign a different meaning to it. If I say "blue," what do you see? Pale blue like in the sky along the horizon? Royal blue? Navy? Slate? Do abstracts like "love" or "generosity" mean the same to all people?

Richards proposes a schematic to represent communication in one language:

## SOURCE

DESTINATION

## $\mathbf{S} \Rightarrow \mathbf{E} \Rightarrow \mathbf{T} \Rightarrow \mathbf{R} \Rightarrow \mathbf{D} \Rightarrow \mathbf{D v}$



## S-SELECTOR E-ENCODER T-TRANSMITTER

R-RECEIVER D-DECODER Dv-DEVELOPER

Translation requires at least two of these processes in order for communication to succeed. The translator serves as Destination for the Source Language utterance, and then as the Source for the Target Language utterance. Obviously there are many opportunities for "noise"-imprecision and misunderstanding-to enter and derail the process. ${ }^{2}$

Because of such difficulties Heidegger despaired of even the possibility of translation. ${ }^{3}$ Some biblical translators inquire whether certain texts can be translated correctly because of "obligatory categories" in the receptor languages absent from the biblical languages. ${ }^{4}$ Even if translation is possible, none generates the impact of the original.
. . . the work of translation is just like chewing food that is to be fed to others. If one cannot chew the food oneself, one has to be given food that has already been chewed. After such an operation, however, the food is bound to be poorer in taste and flavor than the original. ${ }^{5}$

Be that as it may, Christians must translate. If the church is to disciple all nations as Jesus commanded, and if representatives from every language are to enjoy the Kingdom, the word originally sounded in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek must echo-in Khmer, Angave, and English.

## Basic Approaches

But how do we make that happen? In what ways must the translation mirror the original? What rules govern the process?

[^1]All translation should convey into the receptor language the literal meaning of the original. An English translation should therefore produce in my mind the same picture that comes to yours when you read the Khmer original. Thus when we describe one translation as "literal" we are not referring to meaning, since all translation should convey the literal meaning of the original document. However, not all translation transfers the form of the first to the second. That is, the word order and grammar may differ. In fact, very often they must differ!

There are two basic approaches to translation. The first, the "literal" approach (a poor title since, as mentioned above, all good translation seeks to be literal in meaning), seeks to preserve the linguistic form of the source language. The second, or idiomatic approach, attempts to convey the literal meaning of the original in a linguistic form natural to the receptor language, regardless of whether that form parallels the form of the source. These two basic approaches give rise to four types of translation-the highly literal, the modified literal, the idiomatic, and the unduly free. These lie along a continuum with no sharp lines of demarcation between them. Of these, only the modified literal and the idiomatic are acceptable. ${ }^{6}$

A problem with a highly literal translation is that, though it may accurately duplicate the vocabulary and syntax of the original, the translation conveys muddles or no meaning to the reader. Any translation that the translator wants the readers to understand should be pro-
${ }^{6}$ John Beekman and John Callow, Translating the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 19-21. Mildred L. Larson, MeaningBased Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence (New York: University Press of America, 1984), 17, sees seven types of translation in the continuum-very literal, literal, modified literal, inconsistent mixture, near idiomatic, idiomatic, and unduly free. The translator's goal, according to Larson, is to produce an idiomatic translation. The need for naturalness of expression was recognized by Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Methotl, ed. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1975), 358: "But no text and no book speaks if it does not speak the language that reaches the other person." Most sources agree that, to generate maximum impact, a translation should not sound like a translation.
duced according to the "absolute rule that translation occurs not between words but between meanings." ${ }^{7}$

Centuries ago Aquila translated the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek, trying to reflect every detail of the original in his translation. The result was that he carried "Hebraism to an extreme, turning the Hebrew literally into Greek in defiance of Greek idiom. ${ }^{\prime 8}$ Consequently his translation "violates" Greek grammar and terminology." The "mechanical and tortured literalness" ${ }^{10}$ of Aquila's work and its often unintelligible Greek ${ }^{11}$ suggest that it was never intended for popular use. Instead it aided teachers who already knew Hebrew, and served in an interpretive rather than a literary role.' ${ }^{12}$ If it is true "that translation occurs . . . between meanings" then perhaps what Aquila produced was not a translation. Highly literal renderings baffle the reader, obscure the message, and make the work seem ridiculous, obviously foreign, and of little relevance. ${ }^{13}$

A highly literal translation is unacceptable because it conveys little meaning, or because it sounds unnatural. An unduly free translation. on the other hand, fails because it changes the source data. Nowlin criticizes the English Living Bible because Taylor was too free with the original, allowing historical, theological, and lexical distortions to sully the work. ${ }^{14}$ Taylor's "translation" is understandable to the English

[^2]reader (unlike Aquila for the Greek reader), but it distorts the meaning of the original.

## Dynamic Equivalence

The safe course for translation lies between these extremes, employing the strengths and abandoning the weaknesses of each. The data of the source document must be retained, but the linguistic forms by which that data is conveyed may be altered to fit the patterns of the receptor language. While retaining faithfulness to the content and intent of the original, we may abandon formal equivalence in structure and opt for dynamic equivalence.

This attention to the response of the reader of the translation, rather than on reproducing the form of the original, has been called a "new focus" in translating. ${ }^{15}$ But it is not entirely new, since Jerome (c. 347-419), Luther (1483-1546), and Dolet (1509-46) all advocated altering form to convey correct meaning. ${ }^{16}$ Rebutting the accusation that he had mistranslated a letter, Jerome laid down the principle that "in translating from the Greek. . . I render sense for sense and not word for word." ${ }^{17}$ However, though the "new focus" is not entirely new, its recent development does parallel the evolution of the new hermeneutic, with its emphasis on the existential concerns and response of the interpreter.

[^3]Dynamic equivalence promotes contextual consistency in word choice over verbal consistency. ${ }^{18}$ Contextual consistency means making each translation of a word fit its context, though that may entail using different words or phrases, depending on context, to translate any one word from the original. This approach excels verbal consistency because the ranges of meaning for words in different languages do not overlap. The English word "know" cannot consistently be translated by the same Khmer word. To know how to do something is jeh plus the verb; to know a person requires skoal. Therefore to correctly translate the English sentence, "I know Tom, and Tom knows how to fix your problem," requires both skoal and jeh for the one English word "know." We must insist on contextual rather than verbal consistency if translation is to succeed.

This seems quite obvious. But dynamic equivalence goes beyond this to evaluate the total impact of a translation upon the reader. Traditionally, a translation was assessed by comparing the original and the translated texts. If the formal and meaningful structures of the two corresponded, the translation was considered faithful. However, dynamic equivalence inquires whether a translation's readers respond in a manner similar to the way the original readers did. This response includes both intellectual comprehension as well as a sense of the text's relevance and motivation to react to it. That is, a good translation embodies an informative function (communication of data), an expressive function (communication of feeling), and an imperative function (communication of a need to respond). The faithfulness of a translation depends upon its ability to elicit the same response as the original. ${ }^{19}$

## The Need to Understand

Before further assessing the value of dynamic equivalence, let us recall that God meant the Scriptures to be understood. Amazingly,

[^4]not all accept that fact, even though the Bible asserts its own perspicuity. Its last book is called the Revelation ('A $\quad$ оок $\alpha \lambda \cup \psi \imath \varsigma$ ). By its very title, then, the book is an unveiling, a disclosure, a making plain; not an obfuscation or muddling.

> Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. ${ }^{20}$

Christ berated both friend and foe who did not understand the scriptures, implying that they should have grasped them. ${ }^{24}$ Even where the intent of a passage is to withhold truth from an unbeliever, it does so not because the language itself is obscure. Rather, it is the spiritual significance of the simple sayings that is withheld. ${ }^{22}$ Ezra's reading of the Law so the people could understand resulted in repentance, obedience, and joy. ${ }^{33}$

The fact that the Bible is God's word implies that its divine author intended communication and understanding, not rote, mechanical preservation of grammatical form. Viewing God's word this way neither flows from nor results in a weakened doctrine of inspiration. But it is evident from both the nature of the text and the history of its transmission that God cares more that the central message be conveyed from generation to generation than that every word and form of the original always be known with certainty. We possess no biblical autographs; if we did some would doubtless worship them as Israel did the bronze snake. Variants and obscurities pepper both the Hebrew and Greek texts. The debate continues between adherents of the majority and critical

[^5]texts. The gospels suggest that Jesus taught chiefly in Aramaic, yet we have no Aramaic originals to tell us "exactly" what he said. The four gospels vary in their portrayal of the same event. The citation of the Old Testament in the New remains a thorny problem. Sometimes writers cite the Masoretic text, sometimes the Septuagint, sometimes neither. What was important was that they convey the sense of the original rather than always its precise words. The conclusion is clear. Although we do not abandon verbal inspiration or minimize scrutiny of the details of the text, we must insist that understanding of, belief in, and obedience to the message constitutes God's main intent in giving us the scriptures. Jesus rebuked those who exercised great agility with the details of the text but failed to grasp its central message. ${ }^{24}$

## Dynamic Equivalence and Understanding

If then communication of meaning is the goal of scripture, and the words and forms serve as means to achieve that objective and not as ends in themselves, it is important to determine which translation approach best facilitates communication.

School studies in the United States suggest that people understand modified dynamic equivalence translations better than they do formal equivalence translations. This is true at all grade and I.Q. levels, and even of students who had exclusively used a formal equivalence translation through twelfth grade. Chappell thus recommends that

> Evangelical churches and schools adopt [the NIV] as the standard text of Scripture. To do any less would seem to totally disregard the facts and to knowingly inhibit our children's understanding of the eternal Word of God. ${ }^{25}$

Some people oppose this conclusion and argue that ease of understanding should not take precedence over preserving the formal structures-and even ambiguities-of the original text. Edgar asserts

[^6]that "accuracy, not ease of comprehension, is the basic goal in translation. ${ }^{י 26}$ But his illustration of simplifying the theory of relativity by restating it as "two times two equals four" misses the point. Edgar cavalierly misstates relativity, whereas good dynamic equivalence translation labors to preserve original meaning. Parunak argues that Christians should not expect the Bible to be easy to understand: spirituality, study and meditation, and teachers and commentaries are necessary. For him a translation philosophy that does not adhere to strict formal equivalence "aims at producing a translation which is clearer than the original, and which short-circuits the God-ordained means of understanding. ${ }^{127}$ Sometimes echoes of this philosophy reverberate in Cambodia - "Translation B is for spiritual infants because it is easy to understand; the mature study the more difficult Translation A." The conclusion of this school of thought is that the "formal correspondence or literal translation is generally best suited for sustained and careful study of the Bible. ${ }^{י 28}$

However, formal equivalence translation may prove less accurate than one that modifies linguistic structures in the interest of comprehensibility. This is because the vocabulary or grammar of the original, or the milieu in which it was written, may presuppose awareness of cultural assumptions that the modern reader will miss unless they are explained. ${ }^{99}$ Parunak nevertheless argues that ambiguities in the original text should remain ambiguities in the translation, and not clarified through interpretation. ${ }^{30}$

[^7]We should, however, observe a distinction between ambiguities intended by the author and inadvertent obscurities resulting from cultural or linguistic naiveté on the part of the reader. To preserve such obscurities is wrong since most authors (particularly the biblical authors) intend to be understood. Generally, the larger context of an obscure phrase helps lift the fog. If not, the translator should attempt in other ways to determine the meaning of the source text rather than simply produce an ambiguous, "literal" rendering. He has at his disposal greater means of determining the author's intent than does the average reader. ${ }^{31}$ Thus "it is best at least to make sense in the text and put the scholarly caution in the margin, rather than to make nonsense in the text and offer the excuse in the margin. ${ }^{132}$ For example, though some may object to an interpretive translation of 1 Corinthians $7: 36-38,{ }^{33}$ it should be remembered that Paul was answering in these verses questions that the Corinthians had posed. Therefore Paul did not intend the text to convey an uncertain meaning or multiple meanings, nor was it received that way by the Corinthians. ${ }^{34}$ To translate it vaguely today, then, violates the sense of the original. Only in cases where the author intended to be ambiguous (as, perhaps, in John 3:3, 7, where $\alpha v \omega \theta \varepsilon v$ can bear two meanings) should the ambiguity be preserved in translation.

Thus identifying "the love of Christ" as either an objective or subjective genitive would be wrong (p. 7). By this kind of thinking, it would appear that the translation of Luke 20:1f in Frederick C. Grant, Translating the Bible (Greenwich, Connecticut: Seabury, 1961), 135, is the style toward which to strive: "And it became in one of the days teaching of him the people in the temple and evangelizing they stood up the high priests and the scribes with the presbyters and they said saying against him, They tell us in such authority these things you do. . . ."
${ }^{3}$ Jean-Dlaude Margot, "Should a Translation of the Bible be Ambiguous!" The Bible Translator 32 (October 1981):408-9.
${ }^{32}$ Nida and Taber, Theory and Practice, 30.
${ }^{33}$ Thomas Edgar, "Celibates Daughters or Fiancées? An Examination of Translation Techniques in 1 Corinthians 7:36-38," Reflections, Summer 1985, 10.
${ }^{34}$ Margot, "Ambiguous?" 410.

## Limits to Dynamic Equivalence

Having concluded that dynamic equivalence, with its focus upon the reader as well as upon the text, will result in a more understandable and therefore more accurate translation, we must now determine what limits to place upon this procedure. What barriers should be erected to arrest the drift toward "so great a flexibility in translation that . . . 'communication' becomes an ideal abstracted from the message to be communicated"? ${ }^{35}$

First, translators must maintain fidelity to historical references. Beekman and Callow thus object to Jordon's Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles, in which 1 Corinthians becomes "A Letter to the Christians in Atlanta," the things offered to idols in $8: 1$ becomes working on Sunday, and the Jews and Gentiles of 10:32 becomes whites and Negroes. ${ }^{36}$ Carson illustrates the value of retaining faithfulness to historical and cultural references:

> If for instance we replace 'recline at food' or 'recline at table' with 'sit down to eat', we are going to have a tough job imagining how John managed to get his head on Jesus' breast. Preservation of descriptions of what is to us an alien custom, reclining at tables, makes it possible to understand a later action, John placing his head on Jesus' breast. ${ }^{37}$

[^8]Second, fidelity to didactic references means that the doctrines of the original must be maintained even should the translator find these objectionable. Nowlin protests against the Living Bible's phrase "as many as wanted eternal life, believed" in Acts 13:48 ${ }^{38}$ (for ' $\varepsilon \pi i \sigma \tau \varepsilon \cup \sigma \alpha \nu$
 gues for such an understanding. ${ }^{39}$

Third, incomplete, extraneous, and different information must not intrude into the translation. The Living Bible clearly violates this principle in Amos 1:1-"Amos was a herdsman living in the village of Tekoa. All day long he sat on the hillsides watching the sheep, keeping them from straying." When compared to the Hebrew text, this rendering contains significant added and deleted material.

## Restating the Goal

These caveats have been placed upon dynamic equivalence translation by its practitioners. Perhaps the theory could be improved by tinkering with its stated objective of producing equivalent response on the part of the reader. ${ }^{40}$ Is such a response either possible or always desirable? The possibility of evoking equivalent response is questionable because of the historical and cultural distance between the original and translation readers. The desirability is called into question by the situational distance between the two.

[^9]For example, the goal of Paul's writing 1 Corinthians 5 was that the church expel one of its members. Should a translation prompt a church today to expel one of its members where none is living in immorality? The situational differences render the goal of equivalent response undesirable. One of Paul's desired responses to the early chapters of Romans was that Jews not feel superior to Gentiles. Differences between the A.D. 60's in the Roman Empire and the early twenty-first century render such an objective generally unnecessary. These differences may even require a reverse reaction--that Gentile Christians not feel superior to the Jews! The response of the Philadelphia church to its letter ( $\operatorname{Rev} 3: 7-13$ ) should have been one of encouragement and an attempt to keep on the same track (see v. 11, "Hold on to what you have"). If the Laodicean church had responded the same way, it would have been disastrous. ${ }^{41}$

Carson argues against
the unwitting assumption that 'response' is the ultimate category in translation. Strictly speaking, that is not true; theologically speaking, it is unwise; evangelistically speaking, it is uncontrolled, not to say dangerous. ${ }^{42}$

To focus so much on generating equivalent response that the text is adjusted to generate that response is to fail in translation's chief purpose-the reproduction of the identical meaning of the source document.

Neo-orthodox theology, which views inspiration in terms of the response of the reader more than in terms of the writing of the original document, naturally supports freer translations. ${ }^{43}$. While such theology by no means provides the sole impetus toward dynamic equivalence, its pressure in this direction should at least be noted.

[^10]Downplaying the role biblical scholars play in producing a translation in favor of stylists should bear careful scrutiny. ${ }^{44}$ Is content now to be demoted from a priority equal to ease of understanding, to a subordinate position? Do scholars inevitably stutter or drone?

If "equivalent response" is not the desideratum, what is? Perhaps better would be that the reader experience "equivalent grasp of and by the message." "Grasp of" includes apprehension of both the data and the tone of the work. "Grasp by" means that the reader perceives its relevance and senses an urgency to obey it to the extent that his circumstances parallel those of the original audience. By making "grasp of and by" the message translation's goal rather than equivalent response, we maintain the proper distance between the original and present readers while still urging a "fusion of horizons."

## Summary

In summary, translation is a difficult task, requiring the transference not of lexical and grammatical forms into a new language, but the meaning and dynamics of the text. Historical and cultural differences mean that translations that promote merely formal correspondence will not accomplish this goal. Understanding is a prime objective of translation, and dynamic equivalence has demonstrated itself more effective in generating understanding.

However, the focus must not rest so exclusively upon the reader that the original is altered to accommodate him or her. If unchecked, the objective of producing equivalent response may encourage that. Therefore the translator should aim at producing a work in which the

[^11]reader experiences equivalent grasp of and by the work. In this way a balance between the demands of text and reader is maintained.

Nida describes two types of Bibles in Thailand. One is an English translation so old that practically no one understands it. Copies of this translation are useful for hotel owners, however, because the mere presence of one in a room deters guests from stealing the linens. The other speaks the language of the people. After reading this latter, a Buddhist abbot agreed to allow each of his monks to receive a copy of "that remarkable book." However, he warned them not to accept one unless they were prepared to lose nights of sleep. ${ }^{45}$

Let us promote scripture translations that cause people to lose sleep, rather than those that merely discourage the pilfering of towels. But let us also encourage translations that do not adjust the message for the sake of supposed "clarity."

## Appendix

The following is part of a letter. dated 3/30/89, written by Rick Speece. At that time Rick was producing for Wycliffe Bible Translators a New Testament for the Angave people of Papua New Guinea.

Over the past two months eight other translators here in PNG have taken turns joining with two Angave people and myself daily in order to recheck Paul's letters and the book of Acts. This followed several months of checking the same documents with many people at the village of Angai. Now some of you may be wondering, "Why so much checking and rechecking?" Let me try to explain why by putting you in the position of someone reading about events which happened in a culture quite unknown to you. Consider the following story which was translated into English from Inibaloi (a Philippine language) by Lee Ballard.
"...One of those who found (some of the buried money) was Juan Bejar... They arrived with it at night at his house, and he did 'kapi' for it that night at his house at Salakoban. Yes, it was at his house where he did 'kapi' for it.
"The next morning, as they were eating the head, the new jaw bone fell down. And it was not tilted when it fell but rather it was upright and it was pointing east. When the old women saw it, they said, 'Do it a second time. Perhaps they have regarded it as insufficient.' And yes, Juan did 'kapi' for it a second time."

Now test yourselves to see whether this English translation is meaningful. Answer the following questions:

What is meant by 'kapi'?
Why did they do 'kapi'?
Who were eating the head?
What kind of head or whose head was it?
What fell down?
The jaw bone of what fell down?
From where did the jawbone fall?
What is the significance of the jaw bone's position?

How did the old women react to what they saw?
Who regarded what as insufficient?
I suspect that you could not confidently answer many of the questions. Why? Simply because the author told this story to his fellow Inibaloi, who share with him the knowledge of certain cultural facts. Therefore he did not need to make them explicit. Now consider a second translation of the same story.
"...One of those who found (some of the buried money) was Juan Bejar... They brought it to his house at night, and he celebrated the feast of 'kapi' with a pig as payment to the ancestral spirits. Yes, it was at his house there in Salakoban that he celebrated the feast of 'kapi' for it.
"The next morning, as they were having the traditional community breakfast following feasts, the jaw bone of the pig that had been sacrificed the previous evening fell down from the eaves of the house where it is traditionally hung, and it was not tilted when it fell but rather it was upright, and it was pointing east where the ancestral spirits are said to live. When the old women saw it, they regarded it all as a bad omen and said, 'Celebrate "kapi" a second time. Perhaps the ancestral spirits have regarded the pig you sacrificed as insufficient payment.' And yes, Juan celebrated 'kapi' for it a second time."

Did you find the second translation of the story more meaningful than the first? Why? Because cultural information that is necessary for non-Inibaloi speakers to understand the story has been supplied in bold print. Now the second translation is different from the first, but it is the same story simply told in a way that is more meaningful to outsiders.

Now I hope you have a better idea about why we find it necessary to do such extensive checking and rechecking of our translations.

Let's now consider two questions recently asked by consultants checking the Angave translation of the book of Acts. You will recall that in chapter 9 Paul escaped from Damascus by going over the wall in a basket. The translation consultant asked, "How did Paul get into the
basket?" When I translated the question into Angave one of the two ladies with whom we were checking responded, "I don't see how Paul could have gotten into a basket." The other lady replied, "God's Spirit must have made Paul tiny so he could fit into the basket." The ladies' answers were shaped by their culture, for neither has ever seen a basket larger than a 3 gallon bucket. They don't know that in the Middle East they commonly make large baskets into which a full grown man would have no trouble fitting. So we decided to qualify the word "basket" in the Angave translation so that it reads "a very large basket." By making that adjustment we have enhanced the translation so that it communicates the meaning Luke intended his readers to understand.

Later in the same chapter is the story of Dorcas dying and Paul raising her to life again. Verse 37 reads: "...she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room." The consultant asked, "Why did they wash her body?" The Angave ladies talked it over between themselves and replied, "We don't know why they washed the body. We don't do that when someone dies. Furthermore we don't lay the body down. We truss it up in a sitting position. We think, however, that they were just following their own customs of what they would do when people die." In the light of that answer we felt that the text communicated meaningfully as translated and needed no adjustment even though the customs are foreign to the Angave.



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[^0]:    'I. A. Richards, "Toward a Theory of Translating," in Studies in Chinese Thought, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 250.

[^1]:    ${ }^{3}$ Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 54. By contrast, some claim that one book-the Biblewas "made to be translated." William Muir, Our Grand Old Bible, $2^{\text {nd }}$ ed. (London: Morgan and Scott, 1911), 233, says, ". . . the record has shown how truly the Bible is a book made to be translated. As has been well said, the Bible of all books loses least of its force and dignity and beauty by being translated into other languages wherever the version made is not erroneous." But he offers no objective data to substantiate this assertion.
    ${ }^{4}$ Roger L. Omanson, "Can You Get There from Here? Problems in Bible Translation," Christian Century 105 (June 22-29, 1988):605f.
    ${ }^{3}$ Kumarajiva, fifth-century A.D. translator of Buddhist texts into Chinese, cited in Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 15. Robert Henry Robins, "Language," in Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15 ${ }^{\text {th }}$ ed., says that almost invariably in translation something of the author's original intent is lost.

[^2]:    'Jacques Barzon and Henry F. Graff, The Modern Researcher, $4^{\text {ih }}$ ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 350.
    ${ }^{8}$ F. G. Kenyon, The Text of the Greek Bible, $3^{\text {rd }}$ ed., rev. and aug. A. W. Adams (London: Duckworth, 1975), 19.
    ${ }^{9}$ Sidney Jellicoe, The Septuagint and Modern Study (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 314.
    ${ }^{10}$ Frank Moore Cross, Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies, The Haskell Lectures 1956-1957, rev. ed. (Garden City, New York: Anchor, 1961), 180, n. 26.
    "Jellicoe, Septuagint, 108.
    ${ }^{1}$ IJbid., 77.
    ${ }^{13}$ Beekman and Callow, Translating, 26, 30.
    ${ }^{14}$ Gene Nowlin, The Paraphrased Perversion of the Bible, ed. D. A. Waite (Collingswood, New Jersey: The Bible For Today, 1974).

[^3]:    ${ }^{15}$ Eugene Nida and Charles R. Taber, The Theory and Practice of Translation, Helps for Translators, vol. 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 1.
    ${ }^{16}$ Eugene A. Nida, Toward a Science of Translating (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 12-16.
    ${ }^{17}$ Jerome, Letter 57 "To Pammachius on the Best Method of Translating," in St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works, vol. 6 of A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, $2^{\text {nd }}$ series, trans. with a Prolegomena and Explanatory Notes under the editorial supervision of Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Co., 1893), 5 . The deleted words are the parenthetical "except in the case of the holy scriptures where even the order of the words is a mystery". Jerome's exception is unfortunate and should be disregarded.

[^4]:    ${ }^{18}$ Verbal consistency is the goal of the extremely literal (and quite unreadable) Concordant Literal New Testament (Saugus, California: Concordant Publishing Concern, 1966), whose title page boasts that "each word of [the Original] is given a standard exclusive English rendering."
    ${ }^{19}$ Nida and Taber, Theory and Practice, 22-28.

[^5]:    ${ }^{29}$ Deut 30:11-14NIV.
    ${ }^{2}$ Luke 24:25-27; Mark 12:24.
    ${ }^{2}$ Matt 13:10-15; 1 Cor 1:18-25; 2:6-10.
    ${ }^{2}{ }^{3}$ Neh 8.

[^6]:    ${ }^{24}$ Jn 5:39f.
    ${ }^{25}$ Dwight Chappell, A Readability Report on the New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 8.

[^7]:    ${ }^{26}$ Thomas Edgar, "The Word of God or . . . Merely Equivalent?" Reflections, Fall 1983, 3.
    ${ }^{27}$ Van Parunak, "Notes on Translations," 1974 (mimeographed), 7.
    ${ }^{23}$ Richard A. Taylor, "Philosophies of Bible Translating," Reflections, Summer 1985, 4.
    ${ }^{-9}$ See the letter by Rick Speece of Wycliffe Bible Translators in the Appendix.
    ${ }^{30}$ Parunak, "Notes," 8, says, ". . . understandability is no criterion of accuracy of a translation. In fact, the more understandable a translation is. the more danger there is that the translator has violated the basic principle of translation and said something more clearly than the original did!"

[^8]:    ${ }^{35}$ D. A. Carson, "The Limits of Dynamic Equivalence in Bible Translation," Evangelical Review of Theology 9 (July 1985):211.
    ${ }^{36}$ Clarence Jordan, The Cotton Patch Version of Paul's Epistles (New York: Association, 1968). See also his Cotton Patch Version of Luke and Acts (1969). Such adjustments abound in these works which are "an attempt to translate not only the words but the events. We change the setting from first-century Palestine to twentieth-century America" (Paul's Epistles, p. 7). Beekman and Callow's objection may be found on p. 35 of Translating. By contrast, Charles H. Kraft in Christianity in Culture (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1979), 284f, writes that since such transculterations seek to reach alienated groups of people who are repelled by much that they find in standard translations, these kinds of works "should in many cases be a higher priority than production of even the best kind of translations."
    ${ }^{37}$ Carson, "Limits," 209.

[^9]:    ${ }^{38}$ Nowlin, Paraphrased Perversion, 63.
    ${ }^{39}$ Henry Alford, The Greek Testament: With a Critically Revised Text, a Digest of Various Readings, Marginal References to Verbal and Idiomatic Usage, Prolegomena, and a Critical and Exegetical Commentary, rev. Everett F. Harrison (Chicago: Moody, 1958), vol. 2: Acts. Romans, Corinthians, 153.
    ${ }^{40}$ In their Glossary, p. 200, Nida and Taber in Theory and Practice begin their definition of dynamic equivalence as follows: "quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the RESPONSE of the RECEPTOR is essentially like that of the original receptors." Carson raises this issue in "Limits," 203-6.

[^10]:    ${ }^{4}$ Obviously the Laodiceans required no translation to read the letter to Philadelphia. The point is simply that it may be wrong to expect different readers to respond similarly to the same message.
    ${ }^{42}$ Carson, "Limits," 205.
    ${ }^{43} \mathrm{Nida}$, Science, 27.

[^11]:    ${ }^{44}$ Eugene A. Nida, "Bible Translation for the Eighties," International Review of Missions 70 (July 1981):136f. A better outlook is that of Ernst R. Wendland, "Receptor Language Style and Bible Translation: III: Training Translators about Style," The Bible Translator 33 (January 1982):115-16. He proposes that translators themselves be trained in stylistics. Thus lucid style and learned attention to the original can be interwoven from the start as an integral part of the process. "Style is not a jam that can be smoothly spread on after the bread is buttered-it must be applied right from the start of the translation project" (p. 116).

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