

Translations

Written by Jerry Johnson

Webster defines "Bible" as: the sacred scriptures of Christians comprising the Old Testament and the New Testament. Do you know that many so-called translations cannot qualify to be called the Bible? Many, including the very popular NIV? Why not? To begin (addressing the NIV), "All scripture is given by inspiration of God..."(2 Tim. 3:16). The men who penned Scripture were inspired by God to write the words they wrote (we are speaking of the original manuscripts here). The NIV cannot be identified as Scripture for in its own words, the NIV sought for "more than a word-for-word translation;" rather, "fidelity to the thought of the biblical writers." Thus we have the "thoughts of God" (supposed), rather than the "Word of God."

This would be the same as bro. A relating what bro. B said (repeating bro. B's words just as he spoke them,) or bro. A analyzing the words spoken by bro. B and relating what, in his opinion, bro. B was attempting to convey. In this second conversation, the listening party would have no opportunity to know what bro. B actually said. He would only know bro. A's interpretation of what bro. B had said, what he thought he said.

For instance, in explaining their methodology, you will read such phrases as, "in the judgment of the [NIV] translators" or similar. But of a true translation, the translator seeks to capture (as far as possible) the exact wording of the original text, giving us the English word equivalents. It then falls the responsibility of the Bible reader to interpret and harmonize these words (2 Tim. 2:15). We cannot know God's thoughts unless we first know His words.

An illustration of this sort of error is Titus 1:2. The KJV reads, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.") The translators/commentators of the NIV render it "...God, who does not lie," implying that He could, but He chooses not to. What the NIV says, the Bible does not say.

Whether the "Dynamic Equivalent," or the extreme of such "translating" referred to as "paraphrasing," both claim an attempt to interpret and put in clearer language what Inspired men originally wrote. This sounds very noble, and may be their true intent. In fact, this is exactly what we do when we preach, giving the sense. But we would never print one of our most worthy sermons and call it the Bible, no matter how accurate the varied truths of the sermon. Neither should such "translations" as we are studying be called such. When translators attempt to convey, in their opinion, what the Lord meant by what he said, the "translation" becomes only a commentary-a running commentary. Using the NIV as a such a commentary, I have found it excellent in many passages. But it is not the Bible, the Word of God. Thought for Thought In producing such a work, it is the objective of the "translator-commentator" to give what is widely known as the "dynamic equivalent" of the passage under scrutiny. It is the intent, the actual objective of their work to avoid a word-for-word translation of the Greek text, rather to convey to the reader what, in their opinion, the Inspired writer was wishing to convey. (Dynamic equivalence is often referred to as thought for thought translation.) That is all well and good, so long as we understand the work as commentary by fallible men, but with a denominational bias at that. Still, unfortunately, like the little girl with a curl on her forehead, "When she was good, she was very very good, but when she was bad, she was horrid." So often goes denominational commentary. Word for Word

In contrast to "thought for thought" translation, there is an objective sought by other translators

often referred to as "word for word" translation as we have already made reference. It is sometimes referred as "essentially literal" translation and sometimes plenary, meaning complete, full in all respects. These scholars strive to render the original Hebrew and Greek words with their English equivalents, while adapting the original grammar to English grammar. Many believe the Holy Spirit revealed God's thoughts to the writers and left them to express these thoughts in their own words. This could never be, if the Bible is genuine. The truth is, God gave the writers of Scripture the very words they wrote in the original manuscripts.

The "Word" of God, vs. the "Thoughts" of God

Moses and Aaron illustrate very well the nature of divine inspiration. When sending Moses to Pharaoh, God said of Aaron, "And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth..." (Exo. 4:15). When Moses gave the law to Israel, He "told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said will we do" (Exo. 24:3). Verse 4 reveals Moses' faithfulness in all this: "And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord..." These were not thoughts to convey in his own words. The Bible says God gave Moses the very words he was to share with the people. This is what the church has always believed and taught until modernism began to have its sway. Have we not always referenced the WORD of God? Even of the Lord, Moses prophesied, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (Deut. 18:18-19; cf Acts 3:22). 1 Corinthians 2:11-13

The passage that ends all dispute, that unquestionably bears witness to the truth that Inspired men wrote and preached the actual words of God, is 1 Corinthians 2:11-13: "For what man knoweth the things [thoughts] of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him [his own mind]? even so the things [thoughts] of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things [thoughts] that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, NOT in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." The Holy Spirit gave the apostles both the "things" (thoughts) of God and the very words by which to express these thoughts. The original manuscripts were not what the writers sincerely concluded God meant in His revelation, but what He actually said. "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:5). We cannot be so sure of the commentary of men, even if they call their "words" the Bible. -Jerry