





Depth And Breadth

- **Oceanographers**
- **No one knows every verse of every translation in every language over a 2000 year period**

Old Scottish Proverb

“Greek, Hebrew, and Latin all have their proper place. But it is not at the head of the cross, where Pilate put them, but at the foot of the cross, in humble service to Christ”



I. How To Determine Truth

Truth is never settled or proven by Greek words or grammar alone

- **In any language, a text out of context is a pretext**
 - **“If only I knew the Greek...”**
 - **We don’t have to know Greek to know God...but somebody did**

NT Writers & Foreign Words

Talitha koum
Mk.5:41

Siloam
Jn.9:7

Tabitha
Ac.9:36

Melchizedek
Hb.7:1-2



I. How To Determine Truth

II. Difficulties Of Translating

1. *Traduttori, traditori*

Translators are traitors

- Traitors betray their country; translators inevitably betray the meaning of the author. A translation does not give the complete meaning of the original
- Mt.26:41, English – Russian – English:
 - *“The vodka is fine but the meat is rotten”*

Angels on horseback

British Edition of 4 Maccabees 4:10 in NRSV forced translators to use “angels mounted on horses,***” not “angels on horseback”***

In England, “*angels on horseback***” is a culinary expression: *savoury of oysters wrapped in slices of bacon***

Dust of Snow

*The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some
part
Of a day I had rued*

*The way a crow
Sprinkled me
With the snowy
powder
From a linden tree
Gave my heart
A changing spirit
And saved one part
Of the day which I
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Illustration: Ga.3:24

No single English word can tell us what function the Jewish law performed

- ***Schoolmaster & tutor*** imply a teacher
- ***Pedagogue***: a household slave whose duty was to conduct boys of the family to and from school and to superintend their conduct generally
- ***Custodian*** or ***attendant*** are better.
Mr. French. ***School bus***

2. *Lexical problems*

- Many words have multiple meanings
 - “**Set**”: 194 different meanings
[noun 58x; verb 126x; adjective 10x]
 - “**Ball**”: sphere; game to play; Cinderella; on the ball; have a ball
- Latin, *ago*:

drive

do

discuss

live

spend

Lk.23:23

- Lit., *with great (mega) voices*

Stone

Mt.27:60

Wind

Jn.6:18

Fish

Jn.21:11

City

Rv.11:8

Translators' choices

- In English, a *great* voice refers to *quality*, not *volume*. A singer. . .
- Literal translation of Lk.23:23 confuses
- Secondary meaning conveys *thought* of original writer, but *not* exact word
[N]KJV et al.: with *loud* voices

hUPOLAMBANW

- **Take up**, **welcome**, **catch up** (in speech), **suppose**
 - Ac.1:9, *take up* (literal meaning)
 - 3 Jn.8, *welcome, receive* (take up from under, i.e., support, brace up, undergird, show hospitality to)
 - Lk.10:30, *catch up* (“Taking him up on this....”)
 - Ac.2:15, *suppose*

Translation difficulties

- **Some words in target language are unfamiliar to translators; the target language may not have a word that corresponds to the Greek/Hebrew**
 - **Algonquians: no word for “love”**

- How to say “**wheat**” in an area where it doesn’t grow? Substitute “**grain**”?
(Cf. **figs, camels, ice, snow, etc.**)
- “**Denarius**”: substitute “**peso**”?
Might give impression that the events are recent and local
 - Footnotes help: “*money worth a laborer’s daily wage*”

Context clarifies meaning

- Vulgate of Mt.11:5, series of opposites
 - *caeci . . . vident, et*
 - *claudi . . . ambulant*
 - *leprosi . . . *mundantur* et*
 - *surdi . . . audiunt et*
 - *mortui . . . *resurgunt* et*
 - *pauperes . . . evangelizantur*

Collection, 1 Co.16:1-2

(logeia) “...*not found in profane authors*” [Thayer, 379]

- Thayer lists “**Biblical words**” [705]
- Correctly defines it ***collection*** (based on context)
- 2nd Century B.C. papyri use the word in this sense (M-M, xv)

3. Grammatical problems

■ Passive voice

□ Jack was hit by the ball.

Contrast: The ball hit Jack.

□ Many West African languages have no passive voice. Translators must supply an agent and an active verb

4. Discourse

- Some languages use no direct speech
- Jn.14:6 in indirect speech–
 - *“Jesus said that He was the way, the truth, and the life”*
 - **“Something is lost in translation”**

5. Cultural context

- **Job 2:7-9, Job laments his unfortunate life. In the Tonga (Central Africa), they blame such woes on evil spirits**
 - **They would expect Job family to supplicate his ancestral spirits**
 - **His “odd” behavior would make them think that Job was bewitched, probably by his wife**

Ex.7:13, Pharaoh's hard heart

- In some languages, *hard heart* means “to be courageous”
- Translators must find a way to convey the idea that he was *stubborn*

6. Idioms

- A saying that cannot be understood by the individual words that compose it.

“My girlfriend is cool”

- Uduks of Ethiopia: **“worry”**
 - ***“Do not shiver in your livers; you believe in God, believe also in me”*** (Jn.14:1)
- **“Peace”** in some languages must be translated, ***“to sit down in one’s heart”***

Biblical Idioms

Know, Gn.4:1	sexual relations
Lift up the head, Gn. 40:13; 19	restore to honor; execute
Flow w. milk and honey, Ex.3:8	fertile
Evil eye, Dt.15:9	stingy

Enlarged nostrils, Ps.76:7	become angry
Went in and out, Ac. 1:21	live (influence)
Turn world upside down, Ac.17:6	cause trouble
Double-minded, Ja. 1:8	inconsistent, fickle
Gird up loins of mind, 2 Pt.1:13	prepare

