

Teaching Sound Doctrine

Bible Translations Pt.4

4. The eclectic approach.

a. Looking at all the manuscripts and drawing the best conclusion possible.

b. One might use a reading from the Alexandrian and the next time from the Byzantine.

c. This recognizes that all types have their strong and weak points.

(1) This tries to weigh the evidence and determine which is best from all sources.

(2) This also brings into consideration the early translations and writings of the “church fathers.”

F. Variations.

1. There are over 200,000 variations (some say errors in the Bible, but these are scare tactics).

2. These 200,000 variations occur in 10,000.

3. What makes a variation?

a. If a single word is misspelled in 3,000 different manuscripts then that is 3,000 variations.

b. Transposition of words.

(1) For example: one might have Jesus Christ while another has Christ Jesus.

(2) Even if all the words are represented it is still a variation.

(3) Word order might affect English, it rarely affects Greek.

c. Difference in spelling.

(1) Often names are spelled differently in different manuscripts.

(2) The pool in John 5:2 is spelled: *Bethzatha*, *Bezatha*, *Belzetha*, *Bethsaida*, *Bedsaida*, *Bessaida*, and *Bethesda*.

d. Different forms of the same word (not affecting the meaning).

e. Word substitution (synonymous words).

f. Insertion or deletion of words.

(1) This can be short.

(2) It can be an entire passage (Mark 16:9-20 and John 7:53-8:11).

4. By far the great majority of variations have no bearing on the text of the Bible.

5. Consider what Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix wrote (*A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1968), pp. 365-366.)

“How significant are their variants? It is easy to leave the wrong impression by speaking of 200,000 ‘errors’ which have crept into the text by the scribal mistakes and intended corrections. It was already mentioned that there are only 10,000 places where these 200,000 variants occur. The next question is: ‘How significant are these 10,000 places?’ Textual critics have attempted to answer this question by offering the following percentages and comparisons. a. Westcott and Hort estimated that only about one eighth of all the variants had any weight, as most of them are merely mechanical matters such as spelling or style. Of the whole, then, only about one-sixtieth rise above ‘trivialities,’ or can in any sense be called ‘substantial variations.’ Mathematically this would compute to a text that is 98.33 percent pure.

b. Ezra Abbot gave similar figures,

saying that about 19/20 (95 percent) of the readings are ‘various’ rather than ‘rival readings’ and 19/20 (95 percent) of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection makes no appreciable difference in the sense of the passage.

c. Philip Schaff surmised that all the 150,000 variations known in his day, only 400 affected the sense; and of these only 50 were of real significance; and of this total not one affected ‘an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching.’

d. A. T. Robertson suggested that the real concern of textual criticism is of a ‘thousandth part of the entire text.’ This would make the reconstructed text of the New Testament 99.9 percent free from substantial or consequential error. Hence, as Warfield observed, ‘the great mass of the New Testament, in other words, has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no variations.’ At first, the great multitude of variants would seem to be a liability to the integrity of the Bible text, But, just the contrary is true, for the larger number of variants supplies at the same time the means of checking on those variants.

As strange as it may appear, the corruption of the text provides the means for its own correction.”

G. We have God’s Word, no matter which text-type one wishes to follow.

1. While there will be some variations, they generally will not make a significant difference in translation.
2. Not a single principle of faith nor divine command is involved with any of the variations.
3. We can have complete confidence in the text of the Bible.
4. The problem is, in my opinion, with translation.

III. PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH TO TRANSLATION

A. Translation is authorized.

1. Jesus and the apostles used the Septuagint (called the 70 or LXX).
2. The Septuagint was the Bible of the Jews during the first century.
3. Rom. 3:2 “2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”

B. Important words concerning this subject.

1. Translation: the rendering of the original text faithfully into another language.
2. Interpretation:

a. Explaining what has been said or written.

b. Translation is the first step in interpretation (when needed).

c. Luke 24:25-27 “25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: 26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded [interpreted, ASV] unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

3. Word for Word translation:

a. Must be determined as to how the author is using it.

b. One word for one word and keeping the same order as the original.

(1) This is not possible.

(2) Often it takes more than one word to translate a word and in some languages the order of words is not as important as others.

c. An accurate translation.

C. Think of two ends of a line. One end is highly literal (one word for one word) and the

other is paraphrasing (which is not really translation).

1. All translation can be placed somewhere on this line.

2. Nearer the one word for one word with same order is the approach: Form

Equivalence or Modified Literal.

- a. This tries to stay as close to the original as possible.
- b. Here the emphasis is on the source of the translation.
- c. It tries to catch the mood, essence, and flavor of the original and yet be readable and understandable.

3. Nearer to the paraphrase side we have the approach: Dynamic Equivalence or Functional Equivalence.

- a. Here the emphasis is on the receptor of the translation.

b. This is more concerned with the readability and communication and not what the text says.

c. The NIV preface says, “fidelity to the thought of the Biblical writers.”

d. The process here:

(1) Interpret what the words of the Bible mean.

(2) What the words meant to the people of the first century.

(3) Rewrite the words to try to convey that meaning to the modern reader.

e. Some questions:

(1) What happens when the translator’s interpretation is incorrect?

(2) What happens when the misinterpretation is written into the text.

f. This approach eliminates all possible interpretations other than the translator’s one view.

g. This approach is interpretation, not translation—it is a running commentary parading itself as God’s Word.

h. The majority of latter-day translations are based on this.