

An Authorized Translation

Timothy knew something from his infancy that Paul called “the holy scriptures.” Those scriptures had the ability to impart wisdom unto salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. Paul went on to say that all such scripture is inspired by God. Whatever Timothy had was inspired, thus profitable for doctrine (teaching), reproof (conviction), correction, and instruction in righteousness. It is possible that Timothy had a Hebrew Old Testament, but more likely a Greek translation. Inspiration and authority are not lost in copying or in translating. The point: not only the autographs, but every true copy and every true translation also is inspired by God. We shall look at three things this AM: the text, the translation, and the necessity of having the best possible translation of the Bible in our own language.

I. There Are Two Fundamentally Different Texts of “Scripture”

1. Background. The Old Testament is fundamentally the same in all its copies due to the careful manner of copying prevalent among the Jews. The Isaiah scroll from Qumran (2000 years old) has a few different spellings of personal names and place names, but is otherwise just as the text of Isaiah we have today. The New Testament is a different story. From its earliest days the Christian church had opposition from without (2 Thess. 2:3, 7) and within (Acts 20:30-31). There were “false letters” (2 Thess 2:2) and “false gospels” (Galatians 1:7-9) circulating even in apostolic days. Paul warned of “science” (gnosis) falsely so-called. The Gnostics (cf. The DaVinci Code) both penned new books under false names and made fundamental changes to the texts of the existing books of the New Testament. Witnesses to such corruptions include Eusebius. This was not “fought out” fully until after the persecution by the empire came to an end. But in the fourth century the corruptions of the Greek text were removed and the false “gospels” and “letters” removed at the same time. This approved text “exploded” with new copies and is today represented by over 5,300 Greek manuscripts. The false texts were relegated to places of hiding or destroyed. When they were hidden in dry (arid) places, the hidden texts survived in clay jars until our present day. Archaeological discoveries of these texts led to wholesale integration of their readings into modern translations. Consider 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Cor. 14:37; 1

- Thess. 2:13. Doctrine = verbal plenary inspiration. This inspiration of God attaches to words, not just to ideas. Thus 1 Cor. 2:13; Jer. 1:9. Note the warnings of Deut. 12:28, 32; Rev. 22:18-19. See how proper interpretation may fall to a single word in Matthew 22:32; Gal. 3:16.
2. Doctrine of Providential Preservation. No point having an inspired Bible 2000 years ago. Must have an inspired Bible in every generation and language. Psa. 12:6-7; Ps 119:89, 160; Isa. 40:8; Matt. 5:18; Matt. 24:35; 1 Pet. 1:23-25. Here is the point: an excellent translation of a corrupt text remains a corrupt Bible. The translation of a correct and uncorrupted text (i.e. a preserved text) will depend in great measure upon the translation philosophy of the translator(s).

II. There Are Two Fundamental Translation Philosophies

The two are "formal equivalence" (FE) and "dynamic equivalence" (DE). The basic building blocks of FE are vocabulary and grammar. The basic building block of DE is the idea. Interpretation is minimized as much as possible in FE. DE, on the other hand, concentrates on meaning first of all, which means it is interpretive throughout the process of translation. The method is 1) analysis; 2) transfer to target language; 3) restructure according to target language. This brings us again to the topic of verbal-plenary inspiration.

II. Only The Best Translation Will Do

1. All modern translations save two are based on the "critical text" (cf. I above). Only two are based upon the "received text," viz. the AV and the NKJV. No claim being made for "perfection," nor is that a correct issue. Sadly, however, the NKJV presents doubts in footnotes (meaning essentially commentary), and drops the use of the "th" 2nd person singular pronouns. While the NKJV is an attempt to make improvements upon the AV, we must regard it as a failure at the attempt.
2. A final word about study Bibles. Commentaries, while often useful, should be bound separately. The only Bible Society that still exists that publishes the word of God "without note or comment" is the Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS), which we as a local church continue to support.