

## F. How to Translate

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# Reading Assignments

- Optional:
  - Poythress and Grudem, *Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, especially chap. 4.
  - Ryken, *The Word of God in English*

# Cautions

- Language is complex and deep.
- We do not see everything.
- My own account is sketchy.



Quick solutions  
are suspect.

# Why Look at Translations?

- For your own use.
- For advising others.
- English examples show principles.

# Why Look at Translations?

- For your own use.
- For advising others.
- We will look at English examples. You can extend the principles to other languages and cultures.

# 1. Goals of Translation

# Possible Purposes of Translations

- A help for Greek and Hebrew
- Illustration of cultural relevance
  - Cottonpatch NT
  - Letters to Street Christians
  - The Message
- Continuous reading
- Study of cross-references
- General

Many goals.



# Possible Audiences

- Audiences with lower skills
  - Children's Bibles
  - Bible in Basic English
- Audiences with high skills (college graduate): NEB
- Using ecclesiastical tradition
- General

## 2. Changing Language Form

# Ephesians 3:16

“that according to the riches of his glory  
he may grant you to be strengthened  
with power through his Spirit in your  
inner being ...” (ESV)

# An Example: Eph. 3:16

- κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ
- “according-to the wealth of-the glory his” (intrl.)  
interlinear: copies form, with ungrammatical results.
- “according to the riches of his glory” (KJV, ESV)  
literal method: meaning and form--minimal changes
- “out of his glorious riches” (NIV)  
natural-idiom method: finds natural English idiom
- “from his glorious, unlimited resources” (NLT)  
paraphrastic method: rephrases basic idea

# Comparison of Methods (1)

## Interlinear

“according-to the  
wealth of-the glory his”

- exact copy
- ungrammatical
- unclear

## Literal

“according to the  
riches of his glory”

- words correspond
- strange
- fairly clear

Improvements.



# Comparison of Methods (2)

## Natural idiom

““out of his  
glorious riches”

- some word relations
- ordinary English
- clear

## Paraphrase

“from his glorious,  
unlimited resources”

- ideas only
- easy
- clear

Loss?



# Spectrum of Methods

copy grammar

restructure grammar



inter-  
linear

literal

natural  
idiom

para-  
phrase

easier  
English

problems?

# Nuances

## Literal

“according to the  
riches of his glory”

OT:  
God appears  
in splendor  
and brightness

## Natural idiom

“out of his  
glorious riches”

idea of  
glory in OT?

proportion?

nuances lost

# Nuances in Paraphrase

## Literal

“according to the  
riches of his glory”

## Paraphrase

“from his glorious,  
unlimited resources”

idea of  
lack of limit?

idea of  
riches gone?

nuances changed

# An Example: 2 Sam. 5:19

- (2 Sam. 5:19) הֲתִתֵּנִם בְּיָדִי
- “?-you-give-them into-hand-my” (interlinear)

- “Will you give them into my hand?” (ESV)

literal method: meaning and form--minimal changes

- “Will you hand them over to me?” (NIV 1984)

natural-idiom method: finds natural English idiom

# Evaluation

- Paraphrase is easier, but less nuanced.
- Choose ease or accuracy, but not both.
- Is the most literal always most accurate?

Loss and  
gain.



# Spectrum of Methods (2)

copy grammar

restructure grammar



inter-  
linear

literal

natural  
idiom

para-  
phrase

more  
obscure?

problems  
here?

### 3. Conveying Meaning

# An Example: Prov. 23:16

- וְתִעַלֶּזְנָה כְּלִיּוֹתַי (Prov. 23:16)
- “and-will-exult kidneys-my” (interlinear)
- “Yea, my reins shall rejoice” (KJV)

literal method: meaning and form--minimal changes

- “My inmost being will exult” (ESV; etc.)
  - kidneys are site of emotion

conservative (“essentially literal”) method:  
when form is unclear, change for the sake of meaning

# Comparison of Methods (3)

## Literal

“my kidneys  
will exult”

- ❑ words correspond
  - ❑ strange
- ⇒ • obscure

## Conservative

“my inmost being  
will exult”

- words correspond
- less strange
- clear

Improvements.



# Footnotes Add Information

“My inmost being<sup>1</sup> will exult” (ESV)

---

<sup>1</sup>Hebrew *my kidneys*

# When to Change Form

- Change to make grammatical.
- Change to indicate meaning.
- But questionable whether one should change for ease.

# An Example: 1 Peter 1:13

- ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν
- “up-girding the loins of the mind-your” (interl.)
- “gird up the loins of your mind” KJV
  - literal equivalence
- “preparing your minds for action<sup>1</sup>” ESV
  - conservative equivalence

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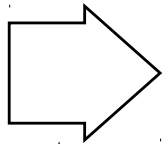
<sup>1</sup>Greek *girding up the loins of your mind*

# An Example: Eph. 1:18

- ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ (Eph. 1:18)
- “the hope of-the calling his”
  - interlinear
- “the hope of his calling” KJV, NKJV, NASB
  - literal equivalence
- “the hope to which he has called you” RSV, ESV, NIV, NRSV, NEB, GNB
  - conservative equivalence

# Difficulties with Meaning

“hope of  
his calling”

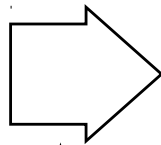


“I hope that he calls me.”

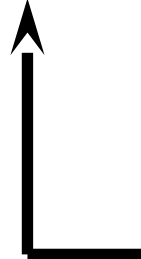


English “of” is naturally  
read as objective

“hope to which  
he has called you”

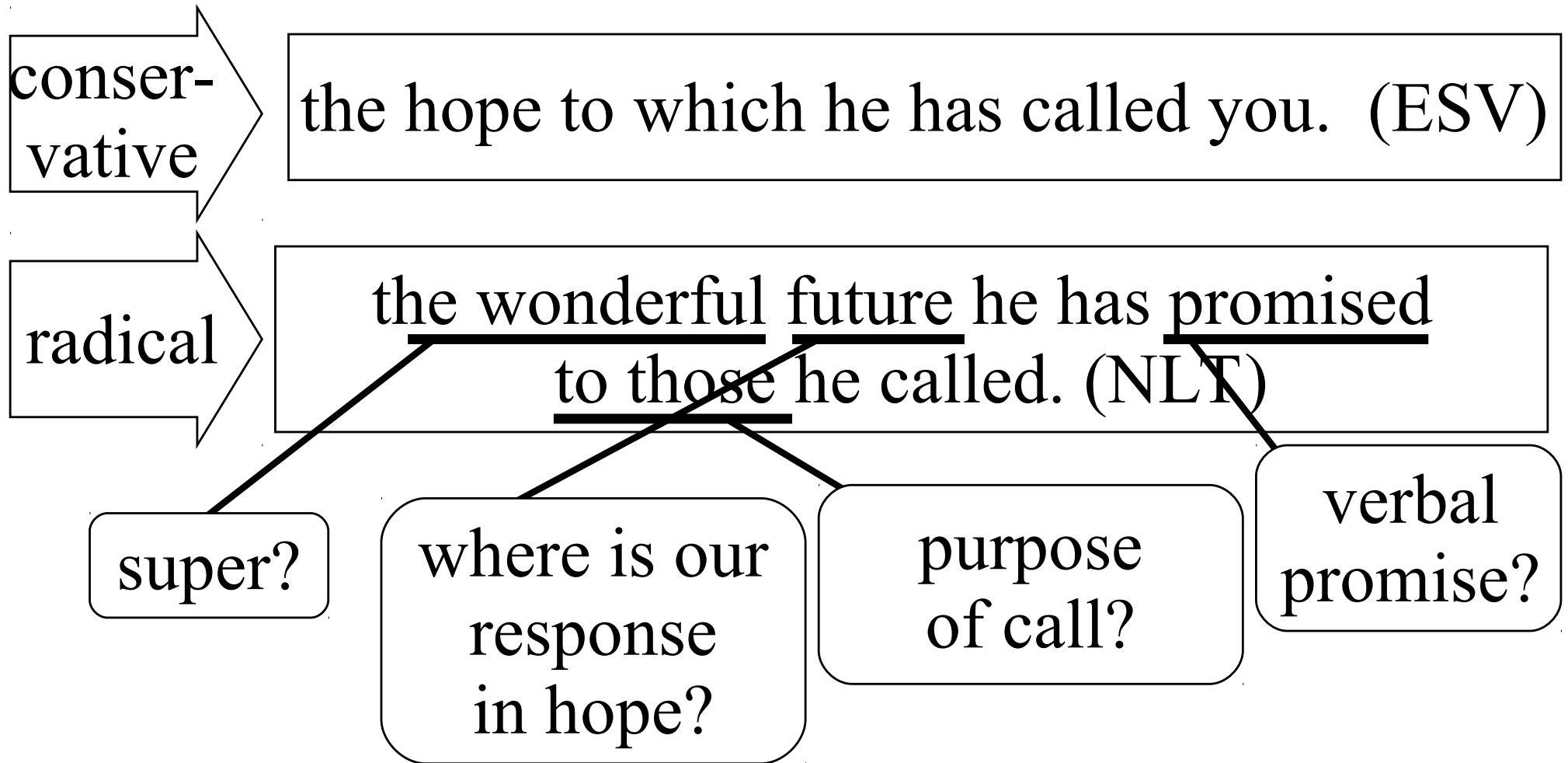


“he has spoken (and  
guaranteed) my  
destiny (hope)”



unambiguous meaning,  
reproducing the Greek

# Paraphrasing (radically restructuring)



# Spectrum of Methods (2)

copy grammar

restructure grammar



inter-  
linear

literal

conser-  
vative

natural  
idiom

para-  
phrase

1-1 match,  
but can lose  
meaning

reason-  
able  
middle

easy, but  
lose nuances

# Conservative (“Essentially Literal”) Method

- Preserve form when possible.
- When meaning is obscure, change form.
- Change form conservatively.
  - No radical paraphrasing.
- Also called "essentially literal" method.

# Terminology for Translation

- 20th century: "dynamic equivalence" moved away from form.
- It used "formal equivalence" to label (somewhat misleadingly) all earlier translations.
- It covered a spectrum.
- Now called "functional equivalence," "idiomatic equivalence," "meaning-based translation."

# Problem with "dynamic"

- Focused on basic meaning.
- Underestimated nuances.
- Became a broad umbrella.

copy grammar

restructure grammar



formal equivalence

?

dynamic equivalence

inter-  
linear

literal

conser-  
vative

natural  
idiom

para-  
phrase

# Evaluation of Translation Methods

- Grammar and vocabulary systems differ.
- Often can copy both grammar and meaning.
- Cannot always copy both.
- When forced to choose form or meaning, copy meaning-content.
- Radical rewriting changes nuances.
- Consider ease for evangelism.

# Evaluation of Methods

- Grammar and vocabulary systems differ among languages.
- Often a translation can copy both grammatical and referential structures.
- You cannot always copy both.
- When forced to choose form or meaning, copy meaning-content (reference) as primary.
- Radical rewriting changes nuances.
- Consider ease of reading for evangelism.

# An Example: Judges 21:25

- “Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”  
(ESV)

conservative method: with minimal changes

- “Everyone did as he saw fit.” (NIV)

natural-idiom method: finds natural English idiom

# An Example: 1 Kings 2:10

- “Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. And the time that David reigned over Israel was forty years.” (ESV)

conservative method: with minimal changes

David.” (NLT)

natural-idiom method: finds natural English idiom

## 4. The Question of Culture

# Cultural Transfer:

## 1 Cor. 16:20

- “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (NASB, ESV, NIV)
- “I should like you to shake hands all round as a sign of Christian love.” (Phillips)
- “Pass the greetings around with holy embraces! (Message)
- “Greet each other in Christian love.” (NLT)

# Cultural Transfer:

## Heb. 12:20

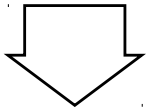
- “They could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’ ” (ESV)
- “They were afraid to move.” (Message)
- “They staggered back under God’s command ...” (NLT)

# Cultural: Heb 13:9

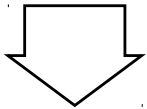
- “Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings” (ESV).
- “So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas” (NLT).
  - our culture attracted by newness
- “Don’t be lured away from him by the latest speculations about him” (Message).
  - our culture attracted by speculation

# Questions about Culture

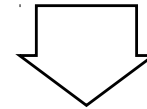
“dynamic equivalence”



from Eugene Nida,  
transferring  
linguistic meaning



John Beekman calls it  
“idiomatic equivalence”



from Charles Kraft,  
transferring  
cultural function;  
“cultural equivalence”

different  
practices

Watch out!



# Cultural Equivalence

## +Insights+

- Embed meaning in cultural context
- Apply gospel flexibly

## -Dangers-

- Wipe out unique history
- Underestimate complexity
- Anthropologist as new priest

# Cultural Equivalence

## +Insights+

- Embed meaning in cultural context
- Apply gospel flexibly in theology and church

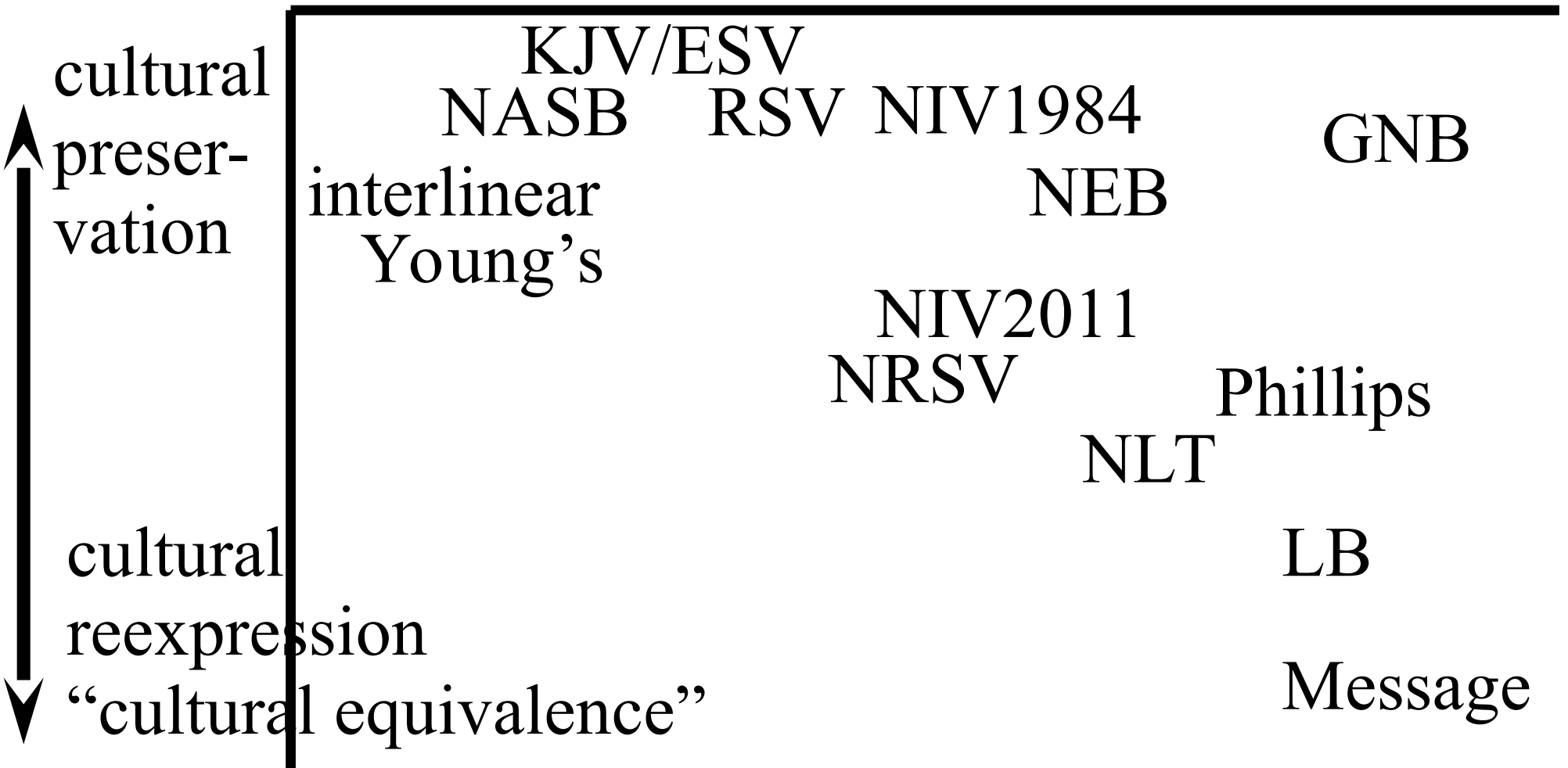
## -Dangers-

- Wipe out unique history
- Underestimate complexity in equivalence
- Anthropologist as new priest

# A Spectrum of Practices

copy grammar

restructure grammar



## 5. Difficulties in Achieving Translation Goals

# Thanks for What We Have

- All main translations show main meanings.
- All show the gospel.
- People come to salvation through them.

# Difficulties with Literal Translation

- Words don't match, 1-1.
- Grammar doesn't match, 1-1.
- 1-1 grammar gives illusion of faithfulness, but subtle obstacles to understanding.
- Difficult to read in large amounts.
- Holiness confused with alienness.

# Difficulties with Restructuring

- Obscurities and ambiguities glossed over.
- Frustrates preacher's reference to interpretive problems.
- Flattens metaphors.
- More prone to big errors.
- Hides allusions to other passages.
- Overconfidence in translator's understanding of language.

# Difficulties with Cultural-Equivalent Translation

- Wipes out scandal of incarnation.
- Can't succeed. (Too many cultural references.)
- Arbitrary stopping point.
- Paternalistic in assuming people can't understand cultures.
- Overconfidence in judging what is “significant.”

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# Choosing a Translation

- One central translation for memorization.
- Reject cultural modernization.
- Look for fullest meaning equivalence.
- Right now in USA, NIV popular.
- But NIV is too dynamic.
- NIV 2011 is gender-neutral.
- ESV (2001) better.

An imperfect world.



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- Reject cultural modernization.
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- But NIV is too dynamic.
- NIV 2011 is gender-neutral.
- ESV (2001) is suitable.

An imperfect world.



## 6. Gender-Neutral Translation

# Dangers from Attitude

- A delicate question.
- Our own sin affects attitude.
- Charity needed.

# Dangers from Attitude

- A delicate question, because of its interface with sexuality.
- Our own pain, confusion, and sin affect attitude, as do backgrounds of others.
- Charity needed.

# The Issue

- Since 1980 academia has turned toward “gender-neutral” English.

*Those* *are* *children*  
He who keeps the law is a wise son,  
but a companion of gluttons shames his father.  
*their*  
*parents*

❑ Should a translation follow?

# The Issue

- Since about 1980 American educated public has turned strongly toward “gender-neutral” English practice.

*Those* ~~He~~ who keeps the law *are* ~~is~~ a wise *children* ~~son~~.

□ Should a translation follow?

# Issues in Language in General

- Real sins toward women exist.
- Idea: “Eliminate generic ‘he’ and other usages for ‘equality.’ ”
- But English is awkward without it.
- There are secondary consequences.

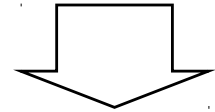
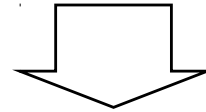
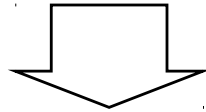
# “Man” and “Men”

Greek:

ἄνθρωπος

ἄνθρω

γυνή



English:

“person, people,  
human being”  
(includes men  
and women)

“man, men,  
husband”  
(male human  
beings)

“woman,  
wife”  
(female  
human  
beings)

# James 3:9

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who have been made in God’s likeness. (NIVI)

Greek: ἄνθρωπος, “people”

O.K.: a good rendering of the meaning of Greek.

# Acts 20:30 “Men”

- “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.”

Greek: ἀνὴρ,  
“male human being”

- “Even from your own number some will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.” (NIVI, TNIV)
- NRSV, NIVI, TNIV, NLT, CEV drop “men.”

Distorts meaning.

# Acts 1:21 “Men”

- “Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ...”  
(NIV)

Greek: ἀνὴρ, “male human being”

- “Therefore it is necessary to choose one of those who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ...”  
(NIVI)

- NIVI, NLT drop “men.”

Distorts meaning.

# The Problem with “Son”

Prov. 13:24 (NIV 1984): He who spares the rod hates his son, ...

Prov. 13:24 (NIV 2011): Whoever spares the rod hates their children, ...

- Hebrew has בן (“son”).

Distorts meaning.

# The Problem with “Son”

Prov. 13:24 (NIV 1984): He who spares the rod hates his son, ...

Prov. 13:24 (NIV 2011): Whoever spares the rod hates their children, ...

- Hebrew has בן (“son”). The change is not lexically based, but shows prejudice against maleness.

# Generic “He”

- “If anyone loves me, **he** will keep my word, and my Father will love him, **and** we will come to him and **make** our home with him” (John **14:23** ESV).

Generic “he” means “he/him/his” used to refer to a representative person in a general statement including men and women.

# Plurals Change Meaning

- “If **anyone** loves me, **he** will keep my word, and my Father will love him, **and** we will come to him and **make** our home with him” (John 14:23 ESV).

individual  
receiver  
and home
- “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (John 14:23 NRSV).

corporate  
receiver  
and home

# Singular Plus Plurals

- “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him” (John 14:23 ESV).

individual  
receiver  
and home

- “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them” (John 14:23 NIV 2011).

corporate  
receiver  
and home

# Types of Translation

## **acceptable**

- “anyone” for original “anyone”
- “person/people” for original “human being”

## **unacceptable meaning changes**

- ❑ “he” to “they” (pluralize whole)
- ❑ “he” to “you” (another way to avoid “he” in some contexts)

# Reasons for Avoiding Generic “He”

- 1 Cor. 9:15-23.
- In America, gender-neutrality is the prestige form.
- Some are aggrieved by generic “he.”

# Reasons for Continuing Generic “He”

- Needed for accuracy in translation.
- Similar to generic masculines in Hebrew and Greek.
- English awkward without “he.”
- Past literature.
- Newspapers attest generic “he.”
- Bible memorization.

Needed.



# What Are Orthodox Christians Doing?

- Various things.

sermons, formal  
oral addresses

modern  
written materials

“you”;  
“he or she”;  
occasionally “he”

“one”;  
“they”;  
occasionally “he”

❑ **But: when translating, much less flexibility exists.**

# Author Controls Meanings

authors

I'll make my sentence plural to avoid "he."

I'll stick with "he" because I want an individual example.

translator

God said it.  
I can't change his meanings.

Cultural Adaptation?

# Problem of Crossing Cultures

- Bible must speak of ancient cultures.
- Generic “he” is “gnat”;  
fathers are “camel.”
- Cultural “adjustments” may increase offense  
and decrease understanding.

# Problem of Crossing Cultures

- Bible must speak of ancient cultures, or else produce gross distortion.
- In straining out the “gnat” of divergent generics, one may make less digestable the “camel” of fatherly authority.
- Hence, minor cultural adjustments may be counterproductive. They may increase offense and decrease understanding.

# Types of Cultural Change

- “He” to “they” in (Messianic) psalms (e.g. NRSV Ps. 34:20)
- “Father” to “parent”
- “my son” (Prov.) to “my child”
- “Son of Man” to “human being”
- Remove masculine elder in 1 Tim. 3
- Remove masculine pronouns referring to God

# Result

- Distorts meaning of God's word
- Loss of meaning in
  - avoiding generic “he”
  - avoiding male meanings
- Not acceptable because more accurate alternatives.

# Future Problems

- Bias in gender-neutral translations generate suspicion.
- Public reading of any gender-neutral translation may prove unacceptable.

# Future Problems

- Clear bias in gender-neutral translations will generate in many people suspicion of gender-neutral language translations in general.
- Hence, public reading of any gender-neutral translation may prove unacceptable to many.

# Test of Gender Neutral

- Test by asking: what happens to generic “he”?
- Look at John 14:23 as test verse.  
“If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

# Which Are Gender Neutral?

- The following remove generic “he”: NRSV, NCV, GNB(1992), CEV, NIVI, TNIV, NIV 2011, NLT, GW.

# Evaluation on Gender

- Cultural adjustments not acceptable.
- Accuracy is primary.
- Gender-neutral translations cannot serve.
- NIV can no longer serve.
- NASB, NKJV, and ESV are also available, without these problems

# Evaluation on Gender

- Cultural adjustments are not acceptable for central translation.
- No translation that sacrifices accuracy for the sake of cultural approval can be accepted.
- Hence, gender-neutral translations cannot serve as central.
- NIV 2011 can no longer serve.
- NASB, NKJV and ESV are also available, without these problems.

# Moving People to Use a New Translation

- Don't move precipitously.
- Be realistic.
- Adapt translation to audience capacity.
- Set an example.
- Show benefit, rather than demanding submission.

# Moving People to Use a New Translation

- Don't move precipitously. Give time for love and trust to grow.
- Be realistic.
- Be open to more than one translation, adapting to audience capacity.
- Set an example.
- Show people the benefit, rather than demanding submission.

# Issue of Devotion to KJV

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. – Rev. 22:18-19

# Data

- ξύλου ["tree"]
- "tree" (NASB, ESV, NIV, RSV, GNB, etc.)
- "book" (KJV, NKJV [with marginal note])
- "book" (*libro* –Vulgate) [vs. *ligno*, "tree"]
- Erasmus in 1516 back-translated from the Vulgate because his one manuscript of Revelation lacked the last six verses. (See Jan Krans, "Erasmus and the Text of Revelation 22:19: ... ," *TC*. 16 [2011], internet.)

## 7. Practicing Translation

# Doing Your Own

- When studying a passage.
- Translate to make sure you understand.
- Avoid jargon and traditional expressions.
- A sermon needs freshness, not reiteration.

# Doing Your Own

- When working through a passage.
- Translate to make sure you understand.
- Stay away from religious jargon and traditional expressions.
- A sermon needs fresh expression, not merely reiteration.

17 הַתְּעוֹרְרִי הַתְּעוֹרְרִי 17  
 קוּמִי יְרוּשָׁלַם  
 אֲשֶׁר שָׁתִית מִיַּד יְהוָה  
 אֶת־כּוֹס חֲמָתוֹ  
 אֶת־קַבְעֶת כּוֹס הַתַּרְעֵלָה  
 שָׁתִית מָצִית:  
 18 אִין־מְנַהֵל לָהּ 18  
 מִכָּל־בָּנִים יִלְדָּהּ  
 וְאִין מַחְזִיק בְּיָדָהּ  
 מִכָּל־בָּנִים גִּדָּלָהּ  
 19 שְׁתִּים הִנָּה קָרְאֲתֶיךָ 19  
 מִי יְנַוֵּד לָךְ  
 הַשֹּׁד וְהַשָּׁבֵר  
 וְהָרָעָב וְהַחֲרָב  
 מִי אֲנַחֲמֶךָ:  
 20 בְּנִיךָ עֲלֵפוּ 20  
 שָׁכְבוּ בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חוּצוֹת  
 כְּתוֹא מְכַמָּר  
 הַמְּלֵאִים חֲמַת־יְהוָה  
 גִּעַרְתָּ אֶל־הֶיךָ

17 Rouse yourself, rouse yourself.  
 Get up, Jerusalem.  
 You have drunk the  
 cup of God's fury  
 which you got  
 from the Lord.  
 You have drunk  
 to the bottom  
 the goblet-cup causing  
 reeling drunkenness.  
 18 There is no one  
 to guide her  
 among the sons  
 she has borne.  
 There is no one  
 to take her  
 by the hand  
 among the sons  
 she has brought up.  
 19 Two things have  
 happened to you.  
 Who will console  
 you? Devastation  
 and destruction,  
 famine and war.  
 How may I  
 comfort you?  
 20 Your sons have  
 fainted. They have  
 lain down in all  
 the street intersec-  
 tions, like an ante-  
 lope caught in a net,  
 Full of the fury of the Lord,  
 the rebuke of your God.

17 Jerusalem, wake up!  
 Rouse yourself  
 and get up!  
 You have drunk the  
 cup of punishment  
 that the Lord in his anger  
 gave you to drink;  
 you drank it down, and it  
 made you stagger.  
 18 There is no one  
 to lead you,  
 no one among  
 your people  
 to take you by the hand.  
 19 A Double disaster  
 has fallen on you:  
 your land has been  
 devastated by war,  
 and your people  
 have starved.  
 There is no one to  
 show you sympathy.  
 20 At the corner  
 of every street  
 your people collapse  
 from weakness;  
 they are like deer  
 caught in  
 a hunter's net.  
 They have felt  
 the force of  
 God's anger.

17 Rouse yourself!  
 Rouse yourself!  
 Arise, O Jerusalem!,  
 You who have drunk  
 from the Lords' hand  
 the cup of His anger;  
 The chalice of reeling  
 you have drained  
 to the dregs.  
 18 There is none  
 to guide her  
 among all the sons  
 she has borne;  
 Nor is there one  
 to take her  
 by the hand  
 among all the sons  
 she has reared.  
 19 These two tings  
 have befallen you;  
 Who will mourn for you?--  
 The devastation and  
 destruction,  
 famine and sword;  
 How shall I comfort you?  
 20 Your sons have fainted,  
 They lie *helpless*  
 at the head of every street,  
 Like an antelope in a net,  
 Full of the wrath of the Lord,  
 The rebuke of your God.

## Isaiah 51:17-20

## Mine

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## Isaiah 51:17-20

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מִי יְנוּד לָךְ  
הַשֹּׁד וְהַשָּׂבָר  
וְהָרָעָב וְהַחֲרָב  
מִי אֲנִיחֶיךָ:  
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שָׁכְבוּ בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצוֹת  
כִּתּוּא מִכָּמָר  
הִמְלֵאִים חֲמַת־יְהוָה  
בַּעֲרַת אֱלֹהֶיךָ

## Mine

19 Two things have  
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Devastation and destruction,  
famine and war.  
How may I comfort you?  
20 Your sons have fainted.  
They have lain down in all  
the street intersections,  
like an antelope caught in a net,  
Full of the fury of the Lord,  
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