

Translation Philosophy



Worth of the Vernacular

The multiplicity of languages and dialects, though a consequence of proud human nature, reveals the order and creativity of God. God not only initiated the original diversity of languages at Babel, but He also superintends the process as languages continue to develop and diversify.

Language is a gift from God. We refuse to look down on any language, whether widely or sparsely used, and whether others respect or despise those who speak it. We are committed to demonstrating respect for any people by valuing the language of their hearts, because the identity and worth of any people group, both in others' perception and their own, is inextricably bound up with their vernacular.

Language is for communication. Every language can and should be used in relationship with God, both in speaking to Him and hearing from Him. With God there is not the faintest shadow of distinction between daily life and religion. Any language is worthy to be used in religious matters and church life, and we will in no way promote the idea that any language could possibly be too common or inferior for such uses.

The Word of God speaks to each person's daily walk and relationships, and is best communicated to each person in the vernacular. We therefore conclude that speakers of any language which is used as the primary means of communication among any group, and is likely to continue as such for the near future, should have the Scriptures in their heart language.

Origin of the Text

The Scriptures of the Old Testament came not by will of men, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by His Spirit. Likewise, the New Testament writings were God-breathed, were written by holy men, and are completely trustworthy.

The Bible reveals God to mankind, and also points to Jesus the Living Word who is the fullest revelation of God to man—God in human form. It is right for every person to have the opportunity to search the Scriptures so that they can be led to Jesus and understand God's will. This is why God gave the Bible. This is why we translate the Bible.

Preservation of the Message

Due to the passing of time, the original manuscripts of the Scriptures are no longer available. Nevertheless, through extant manuscripts we have access to the complete message from God. The written Word of God was not lost with the autographs, but is intact, preserved for mankind by God who gave it. With this confidence we are committed to taking the written Word to the peoples who lack it.

Translatability of the Scriptures

The idea of Scripture translation flows from the concept of the Incarnation. God sent His Word in human form. By identifying with us as a man, Jesus revealed God and His will in a way uniquely comprehensible to us as humans. Bible translation applies this principle to the written Word.

From the beginning, the Church has understood that Bible translation originates in the mind and heart of God. The Gospel itself was originally manifested in the context of one culture, Jewish monotheism. But God made it plain that the Gospel was to transcend, infiltrate, conform to—and at the same time transform—all cultures including its original host culture. Since the Scriptures contain the message of this Gospel, they must not remain locked within a foreign script.

We can only conclude that God *intends* that the Scriptures be translated, and that the faithfully translated product be received as His Word.

Priority of Discipleship

The Word of God is not only a script, but is ultimately a Person. The Church's primary task is not to translate the Scriptures, but to make disciples of Jesus.

Our purpose in the host culture setting should be as Jesus' purpose on earth: to leave behind a faithful body of believers who will follow Him in daily life. We will seek in every way to ensure that our translation work, methods, and processes fully serve that end.