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Philosophy of Translation

“For the words that you gave me I have given them, and they have received them and known truly that I have proceeded from unity with you.” John 17:8

“The words that I speak with you are spirit and life.” John 6:63

“Father, hallow them in Your truth, because Your Word is The Truth”. John 17:17

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, and upon the heart of man has not come up that which God has prepared for those who love him. But God has revealed it to us by his Spirit, for The Spirit searches into everything, even the depths of God.

And who is the man who knows what is in a man except only the spirit of the man that is in him? So also a man does not know what is in God, only The Spirit of God knows. But we have not received The Spirit of the world, but The Spirit that is from God, that we may know the gift that has been given to us from God.

But those things we speak are not in the teaching of the words of the wisdom of men, but in the teaching of The Spirit, and we compare spiritual things to the spiritual.

For a selfish* man does not receive spiritual things, for they are madness to him, and he is not able to know, for they are known by The Spirit. * (“d’vanphesh” comes from Napsha –“soul”, “self”, “animal life”, and can mean, “soulish”, “selfish”, “brutish”.)

But a spiritual man judges everything and he is not judged by any man.

For who has known the mind of THE LORD JEHOVAH that he may teach him? But we do have the mind of The Messiah.” - 1 Corinthians 2:9-16

“Every writing which is written by The Spirit* is profitable for teaching, for correction, for direction and for a course in righteousness, that the man of God will be perfect and perfected for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16,17

Translation is a tricky business. The translator, to be most effective, needs to know the meaning of the source he is translating and be able to communicate that in the language of the audience. Translation of scripture is much trickier than translation of the words of man, as a theological-philosophical component exists not encountered in secular sources, for what human can know the meaning of the mind of God? It is not simply a matter of knowing two human languages; it is a matter of knowing the infinite mind of Deity and interpreting and conveying it to humans.

“And who shall be worthy for these things?”, wrote Paul The Apostle,

“For we are not like others who blend the words of God, but according to that which is in the truth and according to that which is from God, before God in The Messiah we speak”. 2 Corinthians 2:16,17

In his second letter to the Corinthians, speaking of ministering the word of God, Paul wrote:

“But in this way we have trust in The Messiah toward God, not that we are sufficient to think anything as from ourselves, **but our power is from God, He who made us worthy to be Ministers of The New Covenant**, not in The Scripture, but in The Spirit, **for The Scripture kills, but The Spirit gives life.**”- 2 Corinthians 3

All the above translations are from this translation -The Original Aramaic New Testament in Plain English, by David Bauscher.

The Bible is a paradox among all literature. It is a book, or collection of books which says that mere words cannot convey truth of themselves, only error and death, and that The Spirit of God alone is Truth and Life. So the Bible is the written word of God which cannot be known by mortal minds. Only God Himself can convey it, and it must also be received by a spiritual mind like God’s mind (*Refer back to 1 Cor. 2:16*)

Effective Bible translation, then, must be primarily the work of The Holy Spirit executed through a human instrument, To some extent, effective translation depends on the inspiration of God as did the writing of the original scriptures, though not to the same extent, of course.

The translation will invariably contain errors, as the target language will not exactly convey the meaning of every original

word or phrase. That kind of error is unavoidable and part of the confusion of languages which God decreed upon the world at Babel, as recorded in Genesis 11.

If the reader or hearer has The Spirit of God within, then The Spirit can bridge the language gap, and what is more important, the mind gap, between God and man.

This translation is not perfect; I really don't believe there is such a thing as a perfect translation of The Bible. I do believe, as Paul, that "we are not sufficient to think anything as of ourselves, but our power is from God."

I can honestly say that while translating the New Testament, I experienced Divine help, power and inspiration all the way through. I am reasonably skilled at learning languages, but I was an apprentice watching his Master taking me through the process of using Aramaic vocabulary and grammar to unveil His Mind and Heart in the English language. I was "along for the ride", as it turns out.

Because of my novice status as an Aramaic scholar (about 8 years), I actually have greater confidence in the results than I might have had if I were a native Aramaean, as George Lamsa was, speaking Aramaic fluently. Lamsa did not need to rely on God nearly as much as I did, and, frankly, I think the resulting translation shows that to be true.

This reveals another paradox.

What men call expertise, superior ability and learning, often prove to be a disappointment and lose the contest to the upstart and underdog who had tremendous challenges to overcome and who went beyond his own capacity and resources to conquer those challenges.

"The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." – Ecclesiastes 9:11

The Old Testament teaches this principle very well: "And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.'" 1Sa 17:33

But we know what happened; though the odds seemed a hundred to one against David, he killed Goliath, for as he said: "The LORD does not save with sword and spear, for the battle is The LORD's, and He will deliver you into our hands."

The Apostle Paul wrote that scripture is of The Spirit of God and must be understood with the aid of The Spirit Who authored scripture. Reading scripture without The Spirit can kill a person!- (**"for The Scripture kills"**) Interpret that as you will; the point is that we must have The Holy Spirit to speak to us directly in order to understand scripture and receive spiritual life. This principle applies to a translator as well as to every reader of scripture.

Knowledge of a language can be a hindrance to properly translating scripture. Let me explain. A person who speaks Aramaic fluently (which I do not, nor did Murdock or Etheridge) may trust in his knowledge of the language and may not feel a need to seek God's help and trust Him to guide him in the translation. Thus his knowledge of the language would be a serious impediment and mitigate the spiritual nature and accuracy of the translation. I know that sounds like a contradiction, and I am not arguing that greater knowledge of the language is undesirable, only that it can be a stumbling block. It does not need to be, and should not be so.

But ask yourself this question: How many translations of The Bible were done by native speakers of Hebrew or Greek? One would think, for example, that the Greek New Testament would be best translated by Greeks who grew up speaking Greek and also know English.

I know of no such translation that is commonly used in the churches.

How can this be, that none of the known translations of the Greek N.T. is done by native Greek speakers? I submit that it is a testament (pun unintended) to human nature.

Translators fluent in the language tend to trust in their fluency, in their translation of a spiritual and Divine text; those who study the language in adulthood are less inclined to be over confident in their ability and more inclined to seek Divine help and to emphasize the spiritual element rather than the linguistic component in translating the Bible text.

Sound understanding of a language is often insufficient in determining the original meaning of scripture, especially when so many words have several different meanings which may make sense in a particular scriptural context.

Here is how I applied this principle to my translation of The Peshitta New Testament: I was always asking myself, "What is God saying to me here? How does this speak to my spirit?" Very often, there are several different meanings for an Aramaic word or

phrase, as is the case with English and all languages. Of course, a spirit of prayer is the only spirit in which to approach the holy task of translating the very words of The Living God, and it was in that spirit and in His Spirit I believe I did approach my task, from start to finish. I did perceive powerful Divine guidance, inspiration, help and confidence in the work. That does not mean I did perfect work, as I know there are errors of all sorts in the translation. What it does mean, as I see it, is that God is pleased with the results and that this translation effectively represents His intended meaning and purpose in writing to us in the first century through His Apostles and Evangelists.

Some look for a translation by one fluent in the source language, i.e. Aramaic, as an indication of the trustworthiness of the translation. Ignoring the issue of the target language, let's focus on the matter of fluency. Fluency generally pertains to the speaking of a language, nothing more. We must consider the matter of literacy first and foremost, when discussing translation of a language. A four year old American boy may be a fluent English speaker, but most likely would be illiterate-i.e., he cannot read or write English, or any other language. The success of translating a written source per se is dependent on the ability of the translator to read and understand the source language, not on ability to speak it. He or she must learn the grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure and idioms of the language.

Consider that Josephus wrote his Antiquities and Jewish Wars in Aramaic and later translated them into Greek. He also wrote in his Greek translation of Antiquities that he could not speak Greek well enough to converse in it. This was because Greek was not his native tongue and he was so used to speaking with his countrymen in Aramaic and not hearing Greek, that he never became fluent in Greek. He was quite literate in Greek, however! His Greek writing is excellent, some of the best compositional Koine Greek ever.

Let me now give an example of how I approached selecting between different possible translations of a verse of scripture: James 2:18

(& to me *) וְלִי (faith) הַיְמָנוּתָא (to you) לָךְ (is) אֵיתָ (to you) לָךְ (a man) אַנְשָׁ (for) נִיר (says), 18 אָמַר
(works *) עֲבָדָא (without *) דְלָאָ (your faith) הַיְמָנוּתְךָ (show me) חוּנִי (works) עֲבָדָא (to me) לִי (is) אֵיתָ
(my deeds) עֲבָדֵי (from) מִן (my faith *) הַיְמָנוּתֵי (to you) לָךְ (am) אָנָא (showing) מְחֻרָא (& I) אָנָא

“For a man says to you, ‘You and I have faith; I have deeds; Show me your faith without deeds and I shall show you my faith by my deeds.’”

All other translations of this verse that I can find start out basically –“Someone says, you have faith, I have works...” The Greek text has this, as do the translations of The Peshitta Aramaic I have read. The Aramaic text can be understood to mean “**You and I have faith; I have works**”, or “**You have faith and I have works**”. There is a subtle difference here, though I believe it is an important one. In the common rendering, it can sound like James is pitting works against faith, almost as the Law keeping Jews who had no faith in Jesus as The Messiah may have argued against Christians who did not live by the Law of Moses but believed in Jesus for salvation. One could come away from verse 18 with the idea that James was arguing with The Apostle Paul about “Faith versus works”. Actually, the context shows that this is not the case, but I believe my rendering is in better agreement with the context than the conventional translation.

James assumes “**You and I have faith**”, which is assuming both parties lay claim to faith. It is thus not a dispute between faith and works, or one group claiming to have faith and another laying claim merely to works; it is two parties both claiming to have faith. Only one, however, also claims to have works- good deeds. This makes the choice of translation easy for me, as it removes all doubt that James’ position is exactly the same as Paul’s and that he is reinforcing the necessity of faith, but only of practical and practicing faith, not of a mere claim to faith or a mental exercise called faith.

Another example is in Hebrews 11:1-

Here are two other translations of The Peshitta of Hebrews 11:1-
“Now FAITH is the persuasion concerning things which are in hope, as if they were in reality, and a revelation of those which are not seen.” -JOHN WESLEY ETHERIDGE

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, as it was the substance of things which have come to pass; and it is the evidence of things not seen.” –George M. Lamsa

Here is my translation:

(those things) אֵילִין (concerning) עַל (the conviction) פִּיסָא (faith) הַיְמָנוּתָא (but) דִּין (is) 11:1 אֵיתִיָּה
(these things) לְהִין (were) דְּהִין (it) הוּ (as if) אִין (in hope) בְּסִבְרָא (that are) דְּאֵיתִיָּהִין
(are seen) מְתַדְּהִין (that not) דְּלָאָ (of those things) דְּאֵילִין (& the revelation) וְגַלִּינָא (in action *) בְּסוּעֵרְנָא

“Now faith is the conviction concerning those things that are in hope, as if it were these things in action, and the revelation of those things that are unseen.”

Needless to say, the translation I have produced is what my spirit hears God's Spirit saying in the Aramaic text (aside from the fact that the primary sense of סוּרָנָא - "surana", is "action"); it is clear and rings true to me. I could give many such examples in the New Testament.

I ask the reader to "Explore everything and hold what is excellent." 1 Thessalonians 5:21

This translation is derived from my Aramaic-English Interlinear NT, which is as literal as a translation can be. There are idioms in Aramaic, of course; these I highlighted in the color interlinear editions in purple, though not always translating idiomatically, but usually word for word. Here in this New Testament in Plain English I have translated most of the idioms as such, which makes it much easier to understand. I have attempted, however, to retain as much of the literal sense as is reasonable in English, though not always in the best English grammar. This is because I am more concerned that the reader get the benefit of the original word order and emphasis, which in Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Arabic) is often quite different from Western non-Semitic languages. Often, Aramaic will rename a subject or object with a pronoun for emphasis; sometimes this will be translated as reflexive: "He himself", "himself", "themselves", instead of the simple personal pronoun. Sometimes a verb is doubled or even tripled for emphasis; this may result in: "*The sower, who sowed, sowed the word.*" -Mark 4:14. The Aramaic root "Zara" is used three times in that short verse, once as a noun and two as a verb. The Greek verse has only one verb and one participle ("the sower"), hence the English translations also have one verb: "The sower sows the word." Another example is: "*And he stretched his hands toward his disciples and said, "Behold my mother and behold my brothers!"*"-Matthew 12:49. The Greek has simply, "Behold my mother and my brothers." Not a big difference here, but I have retained the redundant "behold", simply because it is there in the Aramaic text. Such idiosyncrasies and others are common to Aramaic and Hebrew and are alien to English. It is a difficult balancing act to translate literally and idiomatically simultaneously, while rendering all in good English grammar as well. I am sure improvements can be made and will be forthcoming.

So the translation is very literal, yet idiomatic. I have left the English readable, yet rough, to convey the sense of the original as accurately as possible. I hope the reader will forgive the raw style of some of the translation. I do believe it better conveys the simplicity and power of the Peshitta New Testament. I believe The Aramaic Peshitta is unparalleled in both respects among all New Testament texts.

Many, no doubt, will still want to know my qualifications for doing this translation and presenting it as preferable to that of others who had studied Aramaic longer and were recognized scholars and professors in the field. To such, I present the following from my Original Aramaic New Testament in Plain English:

1 Corinthians 1

26. For you see also your calling my brethren, that not many among you are wise in the flesh, neither are many among you mighty, neither are many among you children of a great family line.

27. For **God has chosen the foolish** of the world to shame the wise, and **he has chosen the weak of the world** to shame the mighty.

28. And **he has chosen those of low descent** in the world and **the rejects** and **those who are nothing**, to nullify those who are,

29. **That no one will boast before him.**

30. But you also are from him in Yeshua The Messiah, he who has become for us the wisdom of God and the righteousness and the holiness and the redemption,

31. According to what is written: "**Whoever boasts, let him boast of THE LORD JEHOVAH.**"

"*Foolish, weak, of low descent, rejects, those who are nothing*"- I think I have attained those credentials, for I have chosen to value what Jesus values and have given up my desire to be "somebody" in the world, so that I may follow my LORD and please Him.

With God's help, inspiration and encouragement, I have completed two translations of the Peshitta New Testament and am in the process of translating the Peshitta Old Testament.

I have done a rough translation of 5% of the 500,000 words of The Tanakh (about 25,000 words) in an interlinear translation. The Psalms should be done soon, which I will publish.

I also can say that I have endeavored always to honor The Triune God, and believe my translation glorifies The Author of all scripture:

Alaha Ava, Brah MarYah Yeshua Meshiakha, w'Rookha d'Qoodsha Breeka, Khath
Alaha, Breek lalam almeen. Ameen.

(God The Father, His Son The Lord Jehovah Yeshua The Messiah and The Blessed
Spirit of Holiness, One God, Blessed to the eternity of eternities. Amen.