

PART III, Chapter 12:

**A TRANSLATOR'S BARRIER OF MYSTERY AND DOGMA**

In this chapter it is necessary to point out the problems of pre-Christian, medieval and modern translators of ancient texts. From my viewpoint, it would be very ignorant if we, superficially, pointed at any translator of Scripture and talked him down. One needs to consider a translator's contemporary conditions in the areas of historical developments, religious beliefs, level of scientific knowledge in specific fields, professional commitments and other detail.

Language is a living thing which is continually being adapted to the standards of the people who speak it. Today's student of a modern language has the opportunity to read books and learn of idioms, phraseology and the current use of specific terms. He may become able to converse fluently in his second language. Still, even in his mother tongue, he would not comprehend the terminologies of certain scientific faculties; a specific study of these would be required.

It is very different when today's linguist deciphers ancient texts written by a forgotten people. He is confronted with an unknown alphabet, a forgotten language and its pronunciation, with phrases and their meanings, and clay tablets that may no longer be easily legible or have edges missing. In a most careful study the linguist familiarizes himself with the strange signs and symbols until he is able to identify one from the other. Then he forms words. Some ancient languages use neither capital letters nor write vowels, as is the case with ancient Hebrew. One or more dots, little symbols or so, make the difference, but scribes who copied such texts may not always have had originals to copy from, which were clear enough in that area. For instance, the Hebrew word for "earth" is nowadays written in several ways in the Latin style of writing : Heb. "erets" or "arats", etc. Thus problems arise as, for example in Genesis 2: the Heb. word "ish-sheh" and "ish-shah" were both translated as meaning "woman" or "wife". In reality, "ish-sheh" translates as "sacrifice" or "sacrificial". A lack of knowledge of the difference created the story of Eve being made from Adam's rib.

The actual, original meaning of ancient words or phrases poses another problem, as they might refer to activities, or to laws, customs, social structure, religious ideals or to sciences that are no longer known.

The literal translation of words may change meanings, or lead to insignificant results, if these words were, originally a part of a phrase whose use was forgotten long ago. Then, of course, there is the lack of knowledge of symbolism which was forgotten among biblical priesthods already a thousand years before Christ. In other words, the translation of ancient texts as well as their interpretation require a certain inspiration to make a translator successful.

Individual ancient and modern nations or kingdoms have each their own ideals and life-styles. I have lived in Iran for about two years, and when I had learned everyday Persian and basic Islamic beliefs, I travelled much in the Near East. It was my desire to study especially people and activities typical of Near Eastern peoples. To this day, the people who live far away from big cities in seclusion, such as walled villages in the desert, or in the highlands, or along the shores of the Caspian Sea, have preserved their life-styles "since time began", as they put it.

Others live in the shadows of ruins which once have been majestic temples and palaces, that are masterly<sup>ful</sup> decorated in highly refined art. The masters of these temples who were the bearers of their civilizations have perished, but the common, simple people continue daily practises known ages ago.

I watched the carpet makers, the creators of silver or copper ware, of brass bottles, paintings on ivory plates in special frames, and so on, and I learned words and phrases that no dictionary could have explained sufficiently to describe the activities involved. At times, I wondered what sort of an interpretation I might have imagined without having observed the underlying procedures. There are actually no English words in existence that could describe some of the aforementioned activities which are unknown in the western world.

When this example is transferred to the work of a linguist who deciphers the unknown language of a forgotten people, who lived thousands

of years ago, then we get an idea of the immense barrier of time and mystery he encounters in his work.

Yes, the Hebrew language is a living language, indeed, which is still spoken and written today. However, there is another side to this coin, too. Let's have a comparison here: many people who speak English, German, or other modern languages have nevertheless problems when they are to read documents of 500 or 1,000 years ago. Not only the spelling of words has changed over centuries but also the meaning of many. For example, in medieval times, when one needed exact detail from the boss, he would have said: "Suffer him to come to me for it, I shall provide it." Today, the word "to suffer" is used literally in terms of physical suffering. This change in meaning has caused the false concept, that we must suffer (physically) to come nearer to Christ or God...

Now, if modern languages have changed so much over centuries, what do we expect of Jewish people? Do we take for granted that they still know the meaning of words or phrases that Moses used more than 3,000 years ago?? And we are not the first generations in history who ought to consider such detail because translators of the 3rd century B.C., who produced the Greek Septuagint, lived more than 1,000 years after Moses and had their own problems with the language used in the Scriptures. Let's take a brief glance at the history of Bible translations:

The first official translation of the sacred Hebrew scrolls was made by 72 Hebrew scholars, six from each of the twelve tribes, in the 3rd century B.C. Pharaoh Ptolemy II of Egypt wanted a Greek translation for the Jews in Egypt who spoke mainly the Greek language, and for his famous library in Alexandria. The 72 scholars were invited to Alexandria and commissioned with this work. (For further information see "The Letter of Aristeas" in the Old Testament Apocrypha.) These translators of the 3rd century B.C., however, no longer had any knowledge of the system of symbolism, which they called "The Sacred Language" because it was known only to blessed (enlightened) people. The Septuagint therefore contains adaptations to the known legends of the Seven-Day Creation, the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, Noah's Flood, and others.

The Septuagint became the major source for our Old Testament.

During the early Christian era, when the church fathers received various Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament, they were quite distressed because each one differed in some way from all others. Thus the debates commenced. Not even a reliable chronology of biblical history was available to Christians. Saint Augustine's book, *"City of God"*<sup>1</sup>, and Henry Chadwick's *"The Early Church"*<sup>2</sup> contain much detail about the early Christian leaders' difficulties and their debates. In fact, St. Augustine suggested in his book that Jewish authorities have given Christians insufficient information because they utterly disliked the idea that non-Jewish people intended to continue their sacred tradition.

By about A.D. 500, St. Jerome had completed the Latin translation of the Bible, called the "Vulgate". He worked with Jewish authorities in Jerusalem --who ignored the teachings of Christ and the apostles-- so that the Latin Vulgate contains the same adaptations as the Septuagint. Moreover, the church fathers of the 5th century A.D. wanted to discard those books from the Old Testament which are now in the Old Testament Apocrypha, although they had been an integral part of the Scriptures throughout Jewish history. St. Augustine, by his authority as bishop of the western church, insisted that they be retained. (See Dr. Charles' Introduction in the Apocrypha, Vol. I.)

A loss of invaluable knowledge occurred to Bible scholars when church authorities decided to eliminate paganism in favour of the spread of Christianity. The intention of this decree may have been a noble one. However, it included the total destruction of all ancient libraries, public and private ones, in Europe, in the Near East and in Egypt. Christian authorities, though, were not the only ones who destroyed invaluable records.

In China, in 212 B.C., the emperor Shih Huang Ti, ordered the burning of all the historical, astronomical, and philosophical works in his empire.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Saint Augustine, "City of God". Translation by Gerald D. Walsh, S. J. Demetrius B. Zema, S. J. and Grace Monahan, O. S. U. and Daniel J. Honan. Image Books. 1958. Page 340.

<sup>2</sup>Chadwick, Henry. "The Early Church". London. Cox & Wyman Ltd., 1976.

<sup>3</sup>Charroux, Robert. "A Hundred Thousand Years of Man's Unknown History". Berkeley. 1970. Page 94.

The famous library of Alexandria in Egypt was burned by Caliph Omar, a Moslem, who conquered Alexandria in 642 A.D. At that time this library is said to have consisted of 700,000 volumes containing the entire transmitted tradition and all the human knowledge of the time.<sup>4</sup>

In "*La Synarchie*" Jaques Weiss reported that some ignorant Irish monks burned 10,000 birch bark runic manuscripts containing all traditions and annals of the Celts.<sup>5</sup>

In the 16th century A.D., Spanish bishops burned enormous quantities of records in Yucatan, Mexico.

Henry VIII, in the 16th century A.D., burned or destroyed the monastic and college libraries during the dissolution of the monasteries.

Further extensive libraries in Rome, Athens, Byzantium, and in many other centers of learning were eliminated. I remember from German history that, in medieval times, anyone who was found to own Greek, Latin, or other such literature, was dragged to the market place and burned alive along with his books.

This loss of invaluable knowledge of ancient history, which had been accumulated over many centuries, virtually wiped out all memories of past civilizations, which had been contemporaries of biblical peoples, in the Christian world. This seemed to have been, at the same time, the end of the memory of the wisdom of the ages.

About 800 to 1,000 years later, then, when translators produced Bible versions in modern languages during the 14th to 18th centuries, they had to rely on biblical texts and the writings of the early church fathers. Since knowledge of civilizations contemporary with the biblical patriarchs had long been lost, it was then credible that Adam and Eve were the first people on earth, and that from them mankind descended. Then, too, Bible translators of the Middle Ages had severe problems in addition to those of modern translators. Firstly, they lived in a transitory era, a time when the wisdom of the ages had faded from the memory of mankind, and when modern natural sciences had yet to be born. Secondly, they had to abide strictly by the

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Page 95.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Page 95.

established doctrines of the church, a fact which posed major difficulties in translatory work:

For instance, as I have mentioned earlier, it was taught and believed in the Christian Church that psychic life is Satan's work. Everyone who had a spiritual (psychic) experience such as foreknowledge was accused of being in league with the Devil. For example, Joan of Arc was a French peasant's daughter. She had a prophetic vision at the time France was in danger. Joan related her foresight to the military authorities and, according to Joan's prophecy, a decisive battle was won and France was saved. However, when Joan returned home, she was accused of being a witch and was burned at the stake on May 30th, 1431. (Later, she was canonized and is today one of the most popular saints in the French Catholic Church.)<sup>6</sup>

Now, how did Bible translators feel when they discovered, that the God-given human soul in each one of us was in Greek the word "psykhe" or "psyche"? They could not reveal this truth but had to choose neutral terms in translations, such as "soul, thing, being, breath, life, breath of life, light, creature, animal soul, beast" and so on. Accordingly, contexts in which the word "psyche" occurred also had to be neutralized. Various words for "power" such as the Greek words "dynamis" and "kharisma" became "things, works, activities" in a physical sense. With these changes the very substance of the Bible was veiled, mystified and surrounded with other neutral terms such as "blessings, glory, holy things" and so on.

Through such glorifications, neutralizations, and "minor" changes to the written word Christians have been deprived of knowledge of the power of religion and its purpose, the major subject of the Scriptures. The dogma according to which psychic life was believed to be Satan's influence, along with the veiling of spiritual or psychic development in the Good Book, put a solid barrier between man and God, although such a development is the sole purpose of human life on earth. This means that, in reality, all Great Teachers of the world obtained their blessings from the Lord through the God-given soul or psyche, and that all were powerful sensitives - or psychics...

Enoch, who was the seventh patriarch from Adam in the 4th millennium B.C., foresaw these things and wrote:

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<sup>6</sup>Encyclopaedia Britannica. 15th ed. 1974. Joan of Arc. Vol. 5:566.

AND NOW I KNOW THIS MYSTERY, THAT SINNERS WILL ALTER AND PERVERT THE WORDS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (sacred texts) IN MANY WAYS, AND WILL SPEAK WICKED WORDS, AND LIE, AND PRACTISE GREAT DECBITS, AND WRITE BOOKS CONCERNING THEIR WORDS...

IEn. 104:10

The apostle Paul foresaw that man of the latter days (of the Dark Ages) would be:

...HOLDING THE FORM OF RELIGION BUT DENYING THE POWER OF IT.

2Tim. 3:5

What is the power of religion? The power of the God-given soul or psyche. To the elders of the church in Corinth Paul wrote:

FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT IN WORD BUT IN POWER.

ICor. 4:20

There are dozens of Bible verses which elaborate on this subject and explain the kind of power involved, and the laws by which the Great Teachers lived to obtain and also retain their various kinds of "spiritual gifts" or powers. In the light of their examples and teachings, one realizes that today's psychic scene, by and large, reminds of Egyptian amulet salesmen, Babylonian soothsayer markets and Roman omen-readers. Yet there are genuine, gifted people among us, but they do not sell their blessings like merchandise; they are sacred to them. But they help the helpless without accepting rewards or making a big story of things.

With consideration for the aforementioned doctrines of the Roman Church, it is apparent why powerful prophets, healers and workers of miracles no longer existed during the Christian era. They were eliminated before they had a chance to develop greater efficiency.

There are also a number of additional Greek and Hebrew words whose true meaning has been hidden in translations. We shall attend to them as we go along interpreting Genesis 1 to 5, when the evidence becomes available.

The changes made to the Scriptures in translations, subsequently, affected Bible dictionaries and concordances. Today, when one purchases a

Greek dictionary, one has a choice between a general dictionary and a Bible dictionary. There are significant differences between them which, evidently, should not exist. However, changes made to the Scriptures should not be blamed only on Jewish scribes of the pre-Christian era nor on medieval translators. Alterations --at times with the best intentions to please contemporary developments-- have always been made and are currently under way. Now the Bible is to be "de-sexed":

*"God is portrayed as both Father and Mother in a highly controversial series of Bible readings issued by the U.S. National Council of Churches..."*

An article to this effect was published in "The Province", Vancouver, B.C., Oct. 16th, 1983. A lectionary, published in 1983, contains alterations of various masculine references to God, kings, brethren, and son of God, a term which is to become "child of God".

This change from "son of God" to "child of God" eliminates very important meanings. A child --we are all children of God-- is spiritually immature and has yet to "grow up". A "son of God" is mature and ready to inherit the Father's kingdom. Besides, Christ explained, elaborating on Gen. 1:26-27 and Gen. 5:1-2, that before God all are sons independent of the physical sexual identity. Only the spirit counts before God, and it is sexless (Luke 20:34-36). These current changes of biblical texts are to please the feminist movement. They are well-meant but, to my understanding, they distort further important issues.

The above example of current changes made to the written word demonstrates, why such changes were made already by pre-Christian authorities, who adjusted texts to their level of understanding and/or known interpretations. The changes made during medieval times should not be held against translators; they did not have any other choice, as explained above.

I used to visit the room where Dr. Martin Luther translated the Latin Bible into German, a room in the Wartburg near Eisenach/Thuringia in Germany; Eisenach was not far from my hometown. Martin Luther spent twelve long years on this translatory work in this room, which was rather small and simple, containing a wooden bedstead, a medieval high desk, and a



round, high swivel stool. From the one window next to the desk, one could see across the roofs of Eisenach to the distant forested hill country. On the desk lay open the original, hand-written translation of the Bible by Dr. Martin Luther. Often, I sat quietly, all by myself, on that stool and admired the marvellously hand-printed letters, where first letters on a page, or a new paragraph, were beautifully decorated. From between the lines, by the care this man put into his written work, one could feel the love he --and many others like him-- put into their work of translations (In 1945, this Luther Bible was removed and is now in the British Museum, London/England.)

Until the 15th century, then, Bible reading was possible only to scholars in Greek, Latin and Hebrew. Translators made it available to a broad audience of educated readers. At the same time, Gutenberg invented the printing press which enabled printers to produce many copies of the Scriptures within a short time, which made the Bible not only more quickly available to readers --they no longer had to wait for hand-written copies-- but prices became more affordable. What a blessing...!

During the past nineteen years, while our team worked on the retranslations and interpretations of the Bible, I felt rather close to medieval translators at times. For instance, when neutral terms occurred, it seemed like a translator of centuries ago waved to me, saying: "Sorry, we couldn't express the underlying meaning, but we knew that someone would pick up where we left off. So check this out carefully..." We surely did that. It is true that we of the 20th century have the opportunity to continue where medieval translators left off. Firstly, we no longer need to fear being labelled heretics who were burned at the stake and, secondly, modern scientists provide knowledge of the laws of nature and of life, on which the ancient system of symbolism is based. This currently existing knowledge assists us in understanding aspects of the wisdom of the ages. To translators of centuries ago it was not available. Furthermore, anthropologists, archaeologists, historians and linguists have recovered much of the lost knowledge about ancient civilizations, which contributes significantly to biblical history from about 4000 B.C. to Christ's time.

However, if anyone believes that today's theologians have the freedom of speech, then he has forgotten that they have professional commitments.

As soon as a theologian steps off the traditional path of concepts, he becomes an outsider, if not an unemployed one. For this reason, lay researchers step in and, in co-operation with authorities in a number of fields, accumulate the information required for a review of the Good Book and its interpretation, and then they author books. In this way, professional commitments are not being upset and everyone is protected but - ancient prophecies come true, anyway, which say that the mysteries of God will be revealed in the Latter Days of the Dark Ages.

With a view to the aforementioned difficulties surrounding translators of the Bible and other ancient records, it is my belief that we ought to be grateful to all who devoted their lives to the preservation, the translations and the teachings of the Good Book. Without these people we would no longer have a Bible.

Now that we have accumulated basic information on the origin of the world religions and their founders, on the nature of ancient records and their contents, as well as on linguistic problems, we are ready for insight into the basic categories in symbolism. Without this information I am certain that most readers would not have considered the possibility that symbolism is a scientific terminology typical already of prehistoric cultures.