

Response to Robert Taylor's Lesson 4: Subtractions in the New Versions of the Bible

Genesis 12:3 (RSV) Are the nations blessed by Abraham or do the nations bless one another, or themselves, by Abraham? Brother Taylor explains: “[T]he passive ought to be retained to show they sometimes get a New Testament passage out of harmony with the Old Testament.” As such, in Galatians 3[:8], the language goes back to reflexive.

I reject Bro. Taylor's argument entirely. It is based on the perceived need to make various verses harmonize over the importance of accurately translating scripture from the original languages!

My reading on the translating of this verb shows that it can be translated either *passive* or *reflexive/reciprocal*. According to the translators who argue for a reflexive translation do so on the basis of later formulations of the Abrahamic covenant which are definitely reflexive (e.g., Genesis 22:18, 26:4). Incidentally, the KJV *incorrectly* translates the reflexive verbs in those passages as passive!

Genesis 1:2 (NEB) has “a mighty wind” rather than the Spirit of God.

~~hesitate to defend NEB; however~~ the NEB is well translated in this text. Furthermore, other quality translations also render the words similarly. In both Hebrew and Greek the word for Spirit means “breath, wind or spirit.”

The word combination used here is רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים (ruwach 'elohiym) can be attested as a “wind of God” or a “mighty wind.” Personally, I would be more comfortable with “mighty wind” if the words were אֵל רוּחַ (el ruwach); but the NEB (and NRSV) here aren't strictly wrong in this translation.

While it is interesting to note that “el” represents the superlative case of something that is mighty, the combination given in Gen 1:2 elsewhere always refers to divine strength (Genesis 41:38, Exodus 31:3, 35:31, Numbers 24:2, 1 Samuel 10:10, 11:6, 19:20, 23, 2 Chronicles 15:1, 24:20, Ezekiel 11:24) and thus should be translated “Spirit of God” here.

Psalms 45:6 (RSV) leaves out “The Lord said to my Lord.” Bro. Taylor said, “... what we read in an accurate and competent Bible where it is said 'The Lord said to my Lord, Thy throne exists for ever and ever.'”

What “accurate and competent Bible” is it to which Brother Taylor is referring? Even the venerable King James Version doesn't supply what Taylor considers to be missing language!

There is a passage in the Psalms that has the language Brother Taylor believes belongs in Psalms 45:6. That passage is Psalms 110 which reads:

A Psalm of David.

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Brother Taylor has his facts wrong; and this grave error on his part calls to question the importance and scholarship of the many years he spent studying this very topic. Is he trying to convince people who don't agree with him or does he aim to reinforce the views of people who already think like him?

Is 7:14 - “virgin” or “young woman?”

I already disputed this claim in my previous response, in which I concluded:

Mr. Taylor is incorrect in his claim that the Hebrew word **עַלְמָה** ('almah) means “virgin.” His argument centers on the need to translate Is 7:14 to agree with Matthew 1:23 rather than to faithfully translate Is 7:14.

Brother Taylor claims that one translator's views carried the day in the translation of the RSV. I question what Harry M. Orlinsky's theology has to do with our respect (or disrespect) for a translation that was translated by Orlinsky and 13 Christian scholars. If we put too much emphasis on a particular scholar on the translation committee then we will have to reject King James Version as well; for the committee that translated KJV was packed with Calvinists.

Luke 1:27 – Good News for Modern Man. I won't defend this paraphrase. It's a paper tiger.

Mark 16 – where is it?

Remember that KJV New Testament was translated from a document called the Textus Receptus, which is a Greek text compiled from six (6) New Testament manuscripts. On the evidence of much more manuscript evidence, recent scholars have concluded that Mark 16 came into the text after its original penning.

For the interest of documentation, here is an explanation of why scholarship has rejected Mark 16:9-20. The footnote in NRSV reads:

Some of the most ancient authorities [i.e., manuscripts] bring the book to a close at the end of verse 8. One authority concludes the book with the shorter ending; others include the shorter ending and then continue with verses 9-20. In most authorities verses 9-20 follow immediately after verse 8, though in some of these authorities the passage is marked as being doubtful.

The translation from bible.org has a much more detailed and technical explanation at Mark 16:9. The witnesses (manuscripts) are actually named and the various alternate readings are given:

The Gospel of Mark ends at this point in some witnesses (ⲛ B 304 sys sams armms Eus Eusmss Hiermss), including two of the most respected mss (ⲛ B). The following shorter ending is found in some mss: "They reported briefly to those around Peter all that they had been commanded. After these things Jesus himself sent out through them, from the

east to the west, the holy and imperishable preaching of eternal salvation. Amen." This shorter ending is usually included with the longer ending (L Ψ 083 099 0112 579 al); k, however, ends at this point. Most mss include the longer ending (vv. 9-20) immediately after v. 8 (A C D W [which has a different shorter ending between vv. 14 and 15] Θ Æ13 33 2427 Ī lat syc,p,h bo); however, Jerome and Eusebius knew of almost no Greek mss that had this ending. Several mss have marginal comments noting that earlier Greek mss lacked the verses, while others mark the text with asterisks or obeli (symbols that scribes used to indicate that the portion of text being copied was spurious). Internal evidence strongly suggests the secondary nature of both the short and the long endings. Their vocabulary and style are decidedly non-Markan (for further details, see TCGNT 102-6). All of this evidence strongly suggests that as time went on scribes added the longer ending, either for the richness of its material or because of the abruptness of the ending at v. 8. (Indeed, the strange variety of dissimilar endings attests to the probability that early copyists had a copy of Mark that ended at v. 8, and they filled out the text with what seemed to be an appropriate conclusion. All of the witnesses for alternative endings to vv. 9-20 thus indirectly confirm the Gospel as ending at v. 8.) Because of such problems regarding the authenticity of these alternative endings, 16:8 is usually regarded as the last verse of the Gospel of Mark. There are three possible explanations for Mark ending at 16:8: (1) The author intentionally ended the Gospel here in an open-ended fashion; (2) the Gospel was never finished; or (3) the last leaf of the ms was lost prior to copying. This first explanation is the most likely due to several factors, including (a) the probability that the Gospel was originally written on a scroll rather than a codex (only on a codex would the last leaf get lost prior to copying); (b) the unlikelihood of the ms not being completed; and (c) the literary power of ending the Gospel so abruptly that the readers are now drawn into the story itself. E. Best aptly states, "It is in keeping with other parts of his Gospel that Mark should not give an explicit account of a conclusion where this is already well known to his readers" (Mark, 73; note also his discussion of the ending of this Gospel on 132 and elsewhere). The readers must now ask themselves, "What will I do with Jesus? If I do not accept him in his suffering, I will not see him in his glory."

Brother Taylor errs by making the King James Version his standard of correctness rather than evidence from the witnesses (manuscripts).

John 3:16 (and others) – only begotten son (NIV).

Here I refer to the notes by bible.org:

Although this word is often translated "only begotten," such a translation is misleading, since in English it appears to express a metaphysical relationship. The word in Greek was used of an only child (a son [Luke 7:12, 9:38] or a daughter [Luke 8:42]). It was also used of something unique (only one of its kind) such as the mythological Phoenix (1 Clement 25:2). From here it passes easily to a description of Isaac (Heb 11:17 and Josephus, Ant. 1.13.1 [1.222]) who was not Abraham's only son, but was one-of-a-kind because he was the child of the promise. Thus the word means "one-of-a-kind" and is reserved for Jesus in the Johannine literature of the NT. While all Christians are children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ, tekna qeou), Jesus is God's Son in a unique, one-of-a-kind sense.

The word is used in this way in all its uses in the Gospel of John (1:14, 1:18, 3:16, and 3:18).

What is the error being taught by this particular translation of John 3:16 (etc)?

Acts 8:37 – the Eunuch's confession.

Here is bible.org's technical explanation:

A few later mss (E 36 323 453 945 1739 1891 pc) add, with minor variations, 8:37 "He said to him, 'If you believe with your whole heart, you may.' He replied, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'" Verse 37 is lacking in {Å45,74 8 A B C 33 614 vg syp,h co}. It is clearly not a part of the original text of Acts. The variant is significant in showing how some in the early church viewed a confession of faith.

In all sincerity and with love of the Gospel of Christ
and of the Church of the Firstborn from the Dead,
Neil Short