

BEARING PRECIOUS SEED GLOBAL

SUMMARY OF TRANSLATION CRITERIA

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Note: The following criteria and guidelines are the work of BPS Global. They contain principles taken directly from the writings and comments of and discussions with the above individuals.

And with additional help from the following books:

Eternity in Their Hearts, Don Richardson

A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, H.E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey

INTRODUCTION

While perusing the history of the languages that the Bearing Precious Seed Ministries were printing, the ministry encountered some very interesting things. It became evident that the techniques that some of our translators were using were compromising the integrity of the finished project. As research was being developed books were sought to provide criteria for translation. There were many books on the subject of the Bible, but very little on criteria for translation. Scholars of the textual issues were sought to discuss this matter. They agreed unanimously that there was a need in fundamental circles for guidelines and criteria that our translators could use and share one with another so that this work of translating God precious Word would not be compromised. The list that you will see was birthed from those early meetings. By no means is this an exhaustive list; it is being revised frequently as new missionaries and nationals are sought out and they give their life and work experience. It is a great challenge to try to unite men in this area, but we feel that by supplying the list it can be a help and guideline so that this important task will progress to the point that we can say "Thus saith the Lord", in all the languages of the world.

Translation Criteria

Part I General Criteria

1. Source Texts to be Used
 - A. The source of translation for the New Testament will be the Greek Textus Receptus as found in the edition by Scrivener, published by the Trinitarian Bible Society. The source text of the Old Testament will be the Ben Chayim edition of the Hebrew Massoretic Text.
 - B. The King James Bible will be used as translation guide. Difficult and uncertain word choices will be guided by the word choices of the KJB. Where the KJB translated the same Greek or Hebrew word by the same English word, due consideration will be given to doing the same in the translation in order to maintain proper cross-references. There are reportedly several variants between the original language texts and the KJB. In these instances the translator will defer to the wording of the KJB.
 - C. In cases where the translator is not familiar with the Greek and Hebrew source texts, but his mother tongue is English, the translator may use the

King James Bible as the source text. The translation home team will help check the translation against the Greek/Hebrew text.

D. Other Received text translations may be consulted for help.

2. Translation Method:

The translation method to be used is Formal Equivalence. It is sometimes called literal or word-for-word. It is defined as translating word, grammar, and idiom in the source language into the nearest equivalent word, grammar, and idiom in the receiving language. Translation occurs “when the meaning of a message, which has been encoded by the words of one language, is communicated by the nearest formal equivalent words of another language.” (Dr. Charles Turner) This method stands in clear contrast to the dynamic equivalence method and paraphrase method. “The words of God that express His thoughts should be translated word-for-word into any receptor-language so far as syntax will allow. Semantics and interpretation added to the source-language should be no consideration.” (Dr. H. D. Williams)

3. Use of Italics:

A. Since it is obvious that the construction of languages is different, any added terms should be italicized to indicate a difference from the original text. The purpose of italic words is to more clearly reflect the text of the original. It is to differentiate between words that have the force of inspiration, and words that are simply linguistic necessities in translation.

B. Italics should be used:

1) When there is no corresponding Greek word, and the word is not implied in the form of the Greek word, but the word is necessary for understanding or clarity. Example: “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.” “It” has no corresponding Greek word, directly or indirectly, but the sentence would not be grammatically correct without it.

2) Possibly for insufficient Greek support (1 John 2:23)

C. Italics should not be used

1) For subjects of verbs implicit in the Greek personal ending

2) For generic words modified by adjectives, when the Greek adjective is used as a substantive. Exception would be where there is possible debate about what that word should be.

Example: Greek can literally say, “the seeing me” as a substantive adjective, but it directly implies “those who see me”. “Those” would not require italics in this instance.

Masculine substantives generally can be translated with “men,

people, those”; feminine substantives with “women”, and neuter substantives with “the things”.

- 3) For other words that are directly demanded by the form of the Greek
Example: the word “a” does not have a Greek equivalent, but it is directly implied by the lack of the definite article; and there is no indefinite article in Greek.
- 4) There can be many instances where there is not a one-to-one word equivalence, where italics still may not be required. Example: “given by inspiration of God” translates one Greek word, but no italics are necessary.

D Notes and Cross References

- 1) Marginal and footnotes may be used liberally.
- 2) Use should be made of Strong’s Concordance. Where the KJB used the same English word the same receiving language word should be used.

Part 2 Specific Criteria

1. Semantics

- A. Semantics is the study of the meaning of words. A translator must use words according to how they are used and what they mean in their linguistic and cultural context. Therefore, an understanding of the culture in which a language is used enhances understanding of word meaning. Biblical concepts are concepts relating to human life. Most concepts of human life have can be expressed within any human language. We must find their way to express it.
- B. The first step in Bible translating is to clearly understand the message of the Bible without corrupting its message by our own cultural or theological biases. The translator must learn to correctly exegete the meaning of Bible passages. Then we must put that meaning into words that are understood by the native speaker in the context of his culture the way the Author of the Bible intended.
- C. Meaning expressed by a grammatical structure in one language may be expressed by a different grammatical structure in another language. Similar grammatical constructions can signal different meanings. Different grammatical constructions can signal equivalent meanings. A single meaning can often be expressed by several different grammatical

constructions. Several meanings can sometimes be expressed by only one grammatical structure.

- D. The meaning of words should be considered in terms of what they mean to the receiver, not the translator.
- E. The meaning of new words can only be understood in the context of old words already understood. A translation of the Bible that uses new words must have sufficient context surrounding those words to indicate to the reader what these new words mean.
- F. The meanings of words change over time. The translator can use the people's words in new contexts to give old words new meanings.
- G. Words do not have a single, fixed, unchanging meaning. Many words have multiple meanings.
- H. The areas of meaning covered by a word will overlap areas of meaning covered by the other words in the same language, but the overlap will not be complete. For example, "I like you" compared to "I love you."
- I. Areas of meaning in a word will overlap areas of meaning in a word of a different language, but the overlap will not be complete. The translator must find the nearest formal equivalent.
- J. The dictionary definition of a word does not always reflect all the situations in which a word is used. You can discover areas of meaning of a word by observing the situations in which the word is used and how people respond to it in those situations.
- K. A translator must not think he can find an equivalent for a New Testament word in the ethnic language and use that same word as equivalent to every occurrence of that word in the New Testament. Meaning expressed by a single word in a language may need to be equivalently expressed in several words in another language or vice-a-versa.
- L. In addition to their normal referential meanings, a word may also have connotative, contextual, general, specific, idiomatic, figurative, and grammatical meanings.

Referential meaning: This is the meaning normally assigned to a word in usual conversation, the meaning we learn for a word as child.

Connotative Meaning: This involves the emotional response to a word when it is read or heard.

Contextual Meaning: The context that surrounds a word determines its meaning.

General and Specific Meanings: Some words are general (furniture) and some are specific (chair). (See Gal. 1:13 compared to Acts 9:31).

Idiomatic Meaning: This is a word or phrase with a specialized meaning that has nothing to do with the referential meaning (e.g. “the cat is out of the bag” and see Philemon 7).

Figurative Meaning: A word has a figurative meaning when the usual referential meaning does not apply in the context (e.g. Lk.13:32; Is. 53:6)

Grammatical Meaning: Word order sometimes determines meaning. Sometimes it does not.

2. Literary Devices

A. The types of literary composition in the source language such as narratives, hortatory discourse, or conversational doctrine should be maintained in the receiving language if at all possible given the demand of the language structure.

B. As has been stated, a certain meaning in the source language may be expressed by a certain grammatical construction while it may be necessary to express the same meaning with a completely different construction in the receiving language. This turns the construction in the source language into a type of idiom (see Part2,3L). While Bearing Precious Seed Global is committed to a literal word-for-word translation method, we also recognize that idioms and expressions and literary constructions in one language may not be possible to be translated completely literally into another language. Therefore, the translator must translate them into the nearest equivalent idioms, expressions, and constructions in the receiving language. This principle will apply to all the following literary devices and figures of speech.

C. Genitive Structures

A genitive structure in English is made up of two words that are related to each other by the preposition *of*. But, the particular relationship is not defined simply by the two words and the proposition. This structure is common in the NT and has many meanings. The genitive is used to show possession (Acts 21:8), kinship (Lk. 1:27), description (Rom. 2:4), degree (Mt. 23:28), descent (Mt. 20:30), special relationships (Mt. 15:31), location (Lk. 24:49), character (Mt. 10:42), quantity (Lk. 13:21), reference (Mk. 1:1), activity (Acts 1:22; Mt. 12:31), result (Lk. 3:3), object of activity (2Thess. 2:10), time (Eph. 4:30), cause (Phil. 4:9), chronology of events (John 5:29), and kind (1 Thess. 1:3). All this meaning is communicated

in English and in Greek by the same grammatical structure. The genitive structure should also be used in the receiving language if possible. The translator may find that in some languages this cannot be done. For example, the genitive may be available to show possession, but a different structure altogether may be required to show location or time. He should use the grammatical structure that is consistent with the receiving language.

D. Dative Structures

The dative case in Greek is usually thought of as the case of the indirect object, but it has many uses and it can be translated in a variety of ways. In addition to the indirect object, the dative is used in a more specific expression of personal interest (2 Cor. 2:1), to show possession (Lk. 1:7), in reference to (Rom. 6:2), to show place (Jn. 21:8), sphere (Heb. 5:11), means (Mt. 8:16), cause (Heb. 2:15), manner (1 Cor. 11:5), association (Mk. 14:51), and agency (Rom. 8:14). Many languages do not have a dative case. The advice under the “Genitive Constuction” also applies to the dative.

E. Hendiadys

A hendiadys is “the expression of an idea by the use of usually two independent words connected by *and* (as *nice and warm*) instead of the usual combination of independent word and its modifier (as *nicely warm*).” (Miriam-Webster Dictionary online, <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary>) If possible a hendiadys in the source language should be so translated in the receiving language. However, proper syntax in the receiving language should not be violated. Doing so can create an unnecessary misunderstanding.

F. Rhetorical Questions

A rhetorical question is one for which the asker does not expect an answer. In reality, a rhetorical question is not a question at all. The one doing the asking is not seeking information. Rather, he is seeking to impart information by asking a question. Asking a rhetorical question may call attention to a point or emphasize a fact. See, for example, Gen. 39:9. First, the translator must ask whether the question in the source text is a real question or is it rhetorical. Second, he must determine the purpose of the question. According to Beekman and Callow in *Translating the Word of God*, “no other language uses rhetorical questions in exactly the same way, and with the same frequency, as does the Greek of the New

Testament. This means the translator must understand the function of the rhetorical questions he finds in the New Testament, and he must also understand the function of the rhetorical questions he finds in the RL.” (RL means Receptor Language). Some languages don’t use rhetorical questions at all. The translator must be careful that the translation be constructed in such a way as to communicate the intended purpose of the rhetorical question he finds in the Bible.

G. Passive Constructions

The passive voice shows that the subject of a sentence is acted upon by the action of the verb. Examples are Mk 1:9 and Eph.1:13. When available the passive should be used in the receiving language when it is used in the source language. In many languages, the passive voice does not exist. All passive voice sentences in the source language will have to translate as active voice. On the other hand, some languages have no active voice. All sentences must be expressed in the passive voice. However, great care must be taken to express the source language words in the receiving language.

H. Participle Constructions

There are many participles in the Greek New Testament. Many times these are translated in the active voice in the KJB. Sometimes Aorist participles are translated with a phrase that begins with “when.”

I. Indirect Quotes

An example of indirect quotation is Mark 5:20. Indirect quotes should be translated just as they are in the source language. However, some languages do not use indirect quotes. In these cases it may be necessary to change the indirect quote to a direct quote.

J. Implied Information and Connotations

Implied information is information about the setting, culture, and people of the Bible that were well known then, but is not generally known to the ethnic people for whom the translation is being done. Connotations are words that trigger an emotional response or carry a deeper meaning. The translator should be aware of these, but he should translate the words of the source text as they are written. This information is most often best left to footnotes and teaching. The translator must be very careful he does not add unnecessary extra material to the Biblical text.

K. Doublets

A doublet uses two words to say nearly the same thing. For example, “Verily, verily....”, and “...answered and said...” This should be translated as closely as possible in the receiving language.

L. Collocational Clash

This is a combination of words that do not belong together. For example, we say “a herd of cows”, but we do not say “a herd of geese.” Herd and geese do not belong together. They clash. A scriptural example is Romans 9:17, “For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh...” It is recommended that, as a rule, subject to syntax only, collocational clashes in the source text be allowed to remain in the translation. Many times they teach a greater truth.

M. Chiasmus

A chiasmus involves words that are not in their usual logical or chronological sequence. One example in Scripture is Mt. 7:6. The order of a chiasmus in the source text should be translated into the receiving language in the same order.

N. Sentence Length

There are many very long sentences in the KJB. The first sentence in the book of Romans is seven verses long. Many languages do not have sentences this long. The sentence length may have to be adjusted.

O. Anachronism

Anachronism happens when things that did not exist in NT times are introduced into the Bible text in the receiving language. For example, “proclaimed from the housetops” in Luke 12:3 should not be translated as “proclaimed over the radio.” Anachronism must never be introduced into the translated text. This also applies to things such as introducing the name of Jesus into OT prophecies.

P. Conditional Words

Conditional words are used often in Scripture. For example, Greek $\epsilon\iota$, (often translated “if”) is used alone 271 times, and combined with other particles, at least 208 times. If the word is in the source language it should be translated as a word such as with, whether, that, if, etc. in the receiving language.

Q. Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a type of implied information. It involves words or phrases that are left out of a sentence. If we say, for example, “Where are you going?” the reply may be, “Nowhere.” The implied information is “*I am going*”

nowhere.” If the grammatical requirements of the receiving language will allow it, the translator should not supply the missing words. If the native language requires the words to make sense to them, the translator should put the additional words in italics. However, the translator should not supply the words to an ellipsis unless it is absolutely necessary for the translation to make sense.

R. Poetic Passages

It may not be possible to translate Hebrew poetry into the receiving language as poetry. Nevertheless, poetry should still be translated word-for-word obeying the syntax of the receiving language.

S. Key Words

Every effort should be given to translating key words (such as redemption, grace, and propitiation) consistently in the receiving language. When seeking the proper word to use for these concepts, the translator should take notice of how these ideas are expressed by the believers themselves.

T. Negation

If a statement is negated in the source language, then it should be negated in the receiving language. An example is, “not” in Mt. 13:57. Sometimes double negatives are used in NT Greek. These are there for emphasis. Use proper grammar of the RL when translating these.

U. Transition Words:

Transition words, such as “and”, should be kept.

V. Ambiguity

A verse in Scripture is sometimes ambiguous; that is, it can be interpreted in two or more ways. This ambiguity needs to be reproduced in the receiving language.

3. Figures of Speech

Once again the advice given under 2B must also stand here. Figures of speech represent constructions that can be even more problematic than the above literary devices.

A. Similes

A simile is a comparison of two unlike things using a term such as “like” or “as.” Similes in the source language should be translated into the nearest equivalent simile in the receiving language.

B. Metaphors

A metaphor is a word or phrase that literally means one thing and is used in place of another to suggest an analogy or likeness. Metaphors in the

source language should not be changed in the receiving language unless any added words are italicized. A simile or metaphor can be translated literally and explained through teaching and footnotes.

C. Euphemisms and Substitutions

A euphemism is the use of an inoffensive word in place of an offensive word. A substitution is replacing any word for another. An example of substitution is Mt. 21:25, where the word “heaven” is used in place of “God.” A euphemism or substitution in the source language should be left in the receiving language.

D. Hyperbole

A hyperbole is an extravagant exaggeration. An example is Mt. 11:18. Hyperbole in the source language should remain in the receiving language.

E. Litotes

A litotes is a type of understatement in which an affirmative is expressed as the negative of the contrary, e.g. “not bad” or “not a little comforted.” It is recommended that a litotes be translated literally.

F. Metonymy

A metonymy is a device whereby one word is used to stand in the place of another that is closely associated with it. Examples is found in James 3:6 (where “tongue” stands for speech) and Mk. 3:25 (“house” refers to a unit of people). Once again a metonymy should be translated literally.

G. Synecdoche

A synecdoche is “a figure of speech by which a part is put for the whole (as *fifty sail* for *fifty ships*), the whole for a part (as *society* for *high society*), the species for the genus (as *cutthroat* for *assassin*), the genus for the species (as *a creature* for *a man*), or the name of the material for the thing made (as *boards* for *stage*)” (Miriam-Webster) A synecdoche should be translated literally.

H. Irony

With irony a statement is made that means the opposite of what is said. See Mark 7:9 and 15:32. An irony in the source text should be translated into the receiving text.

I. Apostrophe

An apostrophe is used to address something non-living as if it were alive (1 Cor. 15:55). Translate an apostrophe as closely as possible in the receiving language.

J. Personification

Personification gives human characteristics to that which is not human. Examples are Revelation 11:8, Romans 16:20, and Romans 8:22. Personifications should also be retained in the receiving language.

K. Abstract Words

The receiving language may not have equivalent words for abstract words such as peace, hope, glory, love, and repentance. English allows us to change verbs into an abstract noun, such changing “he repents” into “repentance.” Some languages will not allow this. In some languages the noun needs to become a verb phrase. For example, “baptism” may have to become “he baptized him” because of the demands of the receiving language syntax. However, if the syntax will allow it, the translator should find an equivalent word and translate literally.

L. Idioms

An idiom is an expression consisting of several words whose meaning cannot be understood by taking the words literally. English examples would be, “the cat is out of the bag” and “the jig is up” or “he had me in stitches” or “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” John 3:17 says, “And shutteth up his bowels *of compassion* from him.” Shutting up the bowels is a Greek idiom that cannot be translated literally and mean anything in English. An English speaker may think the phrase means constipation. So the KJB translators added the words “of compassion” so that it would make sense in English. An idiom can rarely be translated literally. Many times an idiom in Greek or Hebrew must be translated with an equivalent idiom in the receiving language. When an equivalent idiom does not exist, words can be added (in italics) as in the example from John 3:17 above. In some cases, a clear statement that is different than the source language, but means the same, must be used in the receiving language. The first task of a translator is to recognize idioms and non-literal phrases. If he does not do so and translates them literally, he will most likely distort the meaning. The translator must be very cautious and prayerful when translating idioms. On the other hand, sometimes the meaning of a Greek or Hebrew idiom is not clear to the translator. In those cases, the idiom should be translated literally. The Holy Spirit can reveal the meaning.

4. Finding the Right Words

A. Kinship Terms

Kinship terms, such as, son, brethren, and children, are often used in a figurative sense. John 8:39 speaks of some being “Abraham’s children.” In Mark 2:5, Jesus calls the sick of the palsy “son.” John calls the disciples “little children” in John 8:39. In John 8:44, Jesus calls the devil the “father” of lies. The translation problem occurs when the receiving language does not use kinship terms in a figurative sense or uses them differently than the source language. If the difficulty is simply that the native people may not understand the reference, the translator must judge whether the misunderstanding can be resolved by a footnote or by teaching. The translator must be very careful to distinguish between translating and teaching. The translation does not have to explain things that the source text does not explain. However, the translator must also judge whether he should consider the particular Bible passage he is translating to be an idiom that must be translated idiomatically in the source language. Charles Turner, in *Biblical Bible Translating*, says that, in the Sinasina language, the equivalent of “father” in John 8:44 is “mother.” When translating the Sinasina NT, he felt the verse should be translated idiomatically. Only the translator can judge this in respect to the demands of the receiving language. Nevertheless, great caution should be exercised so that all God’s words are translated.

B. Loan Words

Loan words are words that are adapted to a language from another language. In Luke 15:22, the Bible speaks of shoes and rings. Suppose there are no words for shoes and rings in the receiving language. These words can be adapted from the national language of the country or from the language in which they first heard the words. Explanations of their meaning can be left to footnotes and teaching. The translator will have the aid of his native translation helper to successfully adapt the words. One must be careful when bringing a word from one language to another. The word Jehovah sounds like a Sinasina word (tsihowa) which means “cucumber.” This can cause considerable confusion if the translator is not very careful.

C. Grammar

Some languages have meanings for words that must be expressed whether a translator wants to or not. For example, some languages make a distinction between older and younger male siblings. So, in Acts 12:2, when it says “James the brother of John,” the translator must distinguish

whether James is the older or the younger brother of John. Chinese distinguishes between a biological mother or a spiritual mother causing a challenge in translating Romans 16:13. There are numerous other grammatical requirements one may encounter. These cannot be ignored and the translator will need quite a lot of discernment.

D. Numbers

Numbers should be translated as they are. Many cultures may have difficulty because of this. They may not understand the concept of 5000, for example. However, helping with this understanding is the job of teaching not translating. The translator must avoid the temptation to add words to Scripture in order to explain difficult concepts.

E. Cultural Substitutions

Cultural substitution involves substituting one item in a culture for a different item in another culture. Several examples are given below.

Luke 11:11 “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?” In at least one culture, the serpent would be chosen rather than the fish because it is considered the better food.

Luke 18:13 “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” The beating of the breast here indicates repentance. In some cultures, the beating of the breast never indicates repentance.

Acts 14:14 “Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out”. Ripping the clothes indicates distress. Again, this may be at variance with the native culture or they may consider clothing to be too valuable to rip.

John 1:36 “And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!” In the native culture there may be neither knowledge of nor experience with lambs.

Luke 12:3 “Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.” It would be very strange behavior for anyone to climb up onto a grass-thatched roof and begin shouting.

It isn't necessary to change the Scriptures in any of these instances. Teaching can solve these difficulties. Take Luke 12:3, for instance.

Shouting news from the housetops is not a part of American or English culture either. But, from teaching we understand what is happening. Neither is ripping the clothes part of American or English culture. Nevertheless, through teaching we can learn what it meant in ancient Jewish culture. In John 1:36, a translator must never use any word other than *lamb*. Teaching can help the people to understand what a lamb is. The same is true for *snow* in Isaiah 1:18 and other places. The words of the sacred source texts are inspired words. They are God's words. If God chose *cloak* in Mt. 5:40, it is God's word and is, therefore, important to God. A different word should not be substituted

F. Methods of Word Hunting

There are many words in the source language where an equivalent in the receiving language may not be available. However, this does not mean that the speakers of the language cannot find ways to express the meaning of the source language words. God has created language to be adaptable when confronted with a new concept or a new experience. An unreached people group will have few words designed to express a Christian experience. Nevertheless, with the missionaries help they will find ways to do so. Some of these expressions may find their way into the new translation. Following are some pointers in finding words.

1) Start Early:

The process of developing vocabulary for translating the Bible should begin the first day one arrives on a new field. It is impossible not to start then. When one is among the people he will be ministering to, he must begin to communicate. He cannot wait. Everything he is, does and has communicates a message. The people will place an interpretation on the missionary's presence that they believe to be the right one. Most likely this interpretation will be incorrect. Therefore, it is imperative that a missionary begin right away to learn to communicate who he is and why he is there. This will require vocabulary building. A vocabulary in keeping with the Bible will take a long period of time to develop. The sooner one starts the better.

2) Contextual Conditioning:

This is simply the principle that the context determines the meaning of a word. The meaning of one word may vary depending on the context. The meaning of any word in the native language can be

modified to add or include Bible meanings. This is done over a period of time by teaching. A missionary may begin by choosing the best word he can find. The native translation helper may suggest a better word as he understands the concept better from discussions with the missionary.

3) Choosing a name for God:

Contextual conditioning can be used to choose a word for God. The word *God* was transliterated into the Yagaria language of Papua New Guinea as *Got*. Since the phonemic structure of Yagarian requires a word to end in a vowel, this became *Goti*. This word meant very little to the Yargaria people until they began to understand its meaning through teaching. So now, *Goti* is the God of the Bible to the Yagaria. This conditioning can be done with the name of a god they worship and that is not like the God of the Bible. However, that is more difficult and there is a great risk of misunderstanding. It would be better to introduce a new word for God than to take that course.

Another way to find a word for God is to choose one from the native culture, when there is a belief in a god that *is* like the God of the Bible in major aspects. Contextual conditioning may be used to perfect their understanding. This cannot be done in all cases, but in some it is best. Some examples of this are listed below:

The Greeks: Paul said to the Athenians, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD (*theos*). Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." (Acts 17:23) The word Paul chose for God was *Theos*. This was not just a generic word for God, it also referred to a specific god that the Athenians worshipped. His nature and name were unknown to them and, so, this and its generic nature made it the perfect word to represent the God of the Bible. Before Paul's time the Greeks had been prepared for this. Three Greek philosophers, Xenophanes, Plato, and Aristotle had used the term *Theos* as a personal name for one Supreme God in their writings.

The Santal: In 1867 two missionaries, Lars Skrefsrud and Hans Borreson, found a people north of Calcutta, India called the Santal.

They learned that the Santal believed in a deity called Thakur Jiu (which means “genuine god”). After hearing the missionary messages, Santal sages insisted that Thakur Jiu was the right name for God. To the Santal this God represented the supreme God that their people worshipped in ancient times. However, they no longer worshipped Him at the time the missionaries came. They had served Thakur Jiu at first, but later turned to spiritism and became captive to the worship of demons. As they studied the history of beliefs of the people, the missionaries found that “Thakur Jiu” did not have any disqualifying beliefs attached to Him. They found Thakur Jiu to be in the “theos” category. Their acceptance of this name had a great and positive effect on the Santal people. It led to great interest and widespread conversions and as many as 80 baptisms per day.

The Gedeo: Several million people in tribes of south-central Ethiopia have a common belief in *Mangano*, the benevolent creator of all that is. One of these tribes is called the Gedeo Tribe. Few of them actually worshipped Mangano. They were more concerned about appeasing an evil being named Sheit’an. They did this because they felt so separated from Mangano that they could not renounce Sheit’an. In 1948, missionaries, Albert Brant and Glen Cain, came among the Gedeo. They found there several who claimed to have been told of their coming in visions from Mangano. They also found Mangano to be in the same category as Thakur Jiu. There was a great response of the Gedeo to the Gospel. Many were thankful for the opportunity to be reconciled to Mangano through Jesus Christ. Three decades later there were more than 200 churches among the Gedeo averaging more than 200 members each.

The Mbaka: A similar story can be told about the Mbaka of the Central African Republic. The designation of the creator in several Bantu languages is *Koro*. Many of the Mbaka were already prepared to respond to the gospel when Ferdinand Rosenau and his Baptist colleagues preached to them in the early 1920’s. The Mbaka not only believed that Koro was the supreme creator God, but they also believed that Koro had sent His Son to do “something” wonderful for mankind. They were resolved that whenever Koro’s

messengers arrived, they would listen and believe their message. Koro was a logical choice of a word for God.

The Koreans: There is a similar story behind the impact of the gospel in Korea. The ancient god of the Koreans was called Hananim, meaning “one god.” By the time the first missionaries arrived in Korea, the Koreans had almost lost sight of the ancient worship of Hananim. The first known missionaries were the Nestorians who arrived in eighth century A.D. The missionaries did not use the name of Hananim and sometimes imposed a completely foreign name for God. When Protestant missionaries entered Korea in 1884, they were virtually unanimous in their choice of Hananim as God. The Koreans were electrified. Today, after a little more than a century, there are around three million in Korean Protestant churches.

All these examples are a matter of historical happening. They underscore the fact that a missionary-translator must be thoroughly familiar with the culture as well as the language of the people. In some cases God may well have left His own name in the native culture as a witness. The missionary must be sensitive to this. His success may depend on it.

4) Coining New Words:

One approach is to make up a new word or phrase to express a Biblical concept, if one cannot be found in the native vocabulary. As time goes on the people may make suggestions about how to modify the term to make it more like what the translator wants, or they may suggest a new term altogether.

5) Listen to New Converts:

When individuals receive Christ and are born again, they become new creatures in Christ. This is a real experience in their lives and they will find a way to express it in their language and culture. The missionary would be wise to listen carefully to their expressions of faith when they pray, preach, teach, witness, or give testimony. This will give the translator a rich source of vocabulary for Bible translation.

6) Widen the Focus of Words

It may be possible to give new meanings to old words. The focus of a language can widen to include new concepts and experiences. Dr. Charles Turner tells us, "...the Sinasina people were originally not acquainted with things like airplanes and cars, but today they have a vocabulary they use to talk about such things. For the *carburetor* of a car they say, 'Where it eats the benzene (gasoline).' For the *headlights* they say, 'Where the fire burns.' These are all fitting expressions for concepts that were not originally part of their culture."

7) Using Old Words in New Ways:

To explain this, it is worth an extended quotation from Dr. Turner: After Abraham came to the land of the Canaanites, he began to use the words of the Canaanite language in new ways. For example, Genesis 8:22 uses the phrase; *There was a harlot in this place.* The word harlot is the Hebrew word "qedeshah." In Exodus 22:31 the phrase *Ye shall be holy men unto me* occur. The word "holy" in this phrase comes from the Hebrew word "qadosh" meaning "to be set apart from ordinary use for a special use." Thus a harlot "qedeshah" was one who had been set apart from ordinary use for participating in the sexual rites used in the Canaanite worship of the fertility god Baal. When Moses wrote Genesis, he chose this same root word to express the concept of "holiness." Moses took what had been an old heathen word and used it to express new meaning. The New Testament writers did the same thing. For example, Paul uses the phrase *our Lord Jesus*. The word *Lord* is the Greek word "kurios." Originally the Roman people reserved the word "kurios" for Caesar. The early Christians were called atheists because they did not accept Caesar as a god. Paul, in essence, said that the real and only true "Kurios" (Lord) is the Lord Jesus. He took what was a heathen word and widened its focus to express new meaning.

8) Contexts in Which to Condition the Use of a Word:

There are several contexts in which a words meaning may and should be changed.

Written Context: When people see a word in the Bible they will understand it based on the context. They will then begin to see new meaning in that word.

Verbal Context: The people need to hear the word used in several different contexts with the same meaning.

Living Context: The meaning of words can be demonstrated in daily life.

Local Church Context: New words and new meanings should be used in the local church. The missionary will express his faith in the language of the people. But, it may be that he missionary will learn more than the people because he will hear them express their faith as well.

9) Combine Old Words Into New Combinations:

Words can be combined in new ways so that they qualify one another and, in the context, create a new meaning. When Germans first saw potatoes they had no word for it. They knew it was grown in the ground so they combined two words and called it an *erdapfel* (an earth apple). The French did the same calling it a *pomme de terre* (apple of the earth).

10) Study Native Text Material:

If there is written material in the native language, the missionary should diligently search it to find suitable vocabulary. If there is no material, the missionary should write down the myths, stories, and histories of the people and diligently study them. The missionary should also record and write down sermons he hears from native speakers. A wealth of vocabulary will be discovered in such texts.

11) Use a Generic Word to Find Specific Words:

When a missionary discovers a generic word, he can ask what is specifically included in this word.

12) Use Hypothetical Situations:

Once a missionary has sufficient ability to communicate and knowledge of the culture, he can ask about culturally relevant hypothetical situations. The answers can expand his vocabulary.

13) Find Words through Teaching;

If a missionary teaches the meaning of a source language word until it is clearly understood, the translation helper may express the meaning of the word in useful ways.

14) Test Words

The translator should test words until he is sure they are being clearly understood.

