

A Look at Other Languaged Bibles

By

J. Paul Reno

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While most of the emphasis of the Dean Burgon Society is focused on the preserved texts, the corrupted texts, and English translations including the pure King James Bible, much of the world does not use Hebrew, Greek, or English. It is within the purpose and function of our society to take a look at other languaged Bibles with the goals of recommending the best, improving the needy, and exposing the faulty. I am not a linguist, but I can see some of the problems. Perhaps God will raise up others to pursue this task with skill and vigor.

II Corinthians 2:17 “For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”

Several things should be noted in this verse.

1. Many have corrupted and are corrupting the word of God.
2. The righteous (“we”) are not in the group who are corrupting the word of God.
3. There is a distinction of attitude (sincerity), behavior (of God), and action.
4. The corruptors would seem to hold the majority position- many. This was so in the Garden of Eden, Jeremiah’s day, Christ’s day, Paul’s day, and today.
5. Biblical separation is necessary over the issue of corruption of the scriptures.

The application of this text to issues we face should help us understand where to stand.

1. We have both pure and corrupted basic texts, i.e. Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. The pure is the Masoretic Old Testament text and the Received Text of the New

Testament. The corrupted are many and varied.

2. Languaged translations are easily corrupted. Three common areas are:
 - a. Use of wrong basic texts.
 - b. Use of wrong translation processes.
 - c. Slant given by the translator(s).
3. Translators' bias may show in word choices, doctrinal spin, intellectual and linguistic abilities and disabilities, and preparation. These areas are reflected in the quality or corruption of the final product.
4. The tendency to corrupt the word of God through translation is easily seen in the English language. With the King James Bible, a pure translation, a perfect standard without error, and of the highest quality and preciseness, we still see inferior translation work being done. Their corruption is seen easily by

comparison. There are multitudes of educated and knowledgeable people to expose the corruption.

The Dean Burgon Society and others will blow the trumpet of alarm, print the exposure, and inform any who care to know. Yet corruption continues with increasing brazenness, growing acceptance, and expanding profits. With corruption easily increasing in English, should we expect better in other languages? *"We are not as many which corrupt the word of God."*

Seven Words

There are seven words to consider with the Bible issue and corruption.

1. **Origination**- the Bible was and is pure in Heaven. *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled"* (Psalm 119:89)
2. **Inspiration**- this is the means by which God gave His pure words through holy men to write a pure copy of what was also pure in Heaven.

3. **Preservation-** this is the means by which God maintained the purity of His word. However, corruptors have created alternate copies which cause great confusion.
4. **Translation-** this is the producing of the Bible in another language. When this is done correctly, people are blessed. Again, the corruptors often produce flawed, faulty, foolish, and fictitious products.
- 5-7. **Interpretation, Presentation, and Reception** are each divided between the purity and corrupt ways of men.

Dr. H. D. Williams in his article, "Recognizing and Producing a Good Bible Translation" deals with the texts, processes, and translators in far greater depth and preciseness. I highly recommend a careful reading of this piece.

When it comes to the translation and study of other languaged translations, we as Bible believers are sadly way behind the corruptors. One

study, The Book of a Thousand Tongues is published by the United Bible Society. It lists the history of 1399 different languages and Bible translation work done in them. The first edition was copyrighted in 1939 by the American Bible Society. The second edition was copyrighted in 1972 by the United Bible Societies. This one was edited by Eugene Nida with the preface written by the Archbishop of York. When looking at the translators, methods, texts, and publishers, a sad history arises with a few glimmers of light. Among some of the major laborers in translation and publication are: Jesuits and other Catholics, British Foreign Bible Society, Wycliff Bible Translators, American Bible Society, the Society for Promotion for Christian Knowledge (London), Society for Propagation of the Gospel, and the Church Missionary Society (Anglican).

Adoniram Judson was a holy and zealous Baptist missionary to Burma. He was intellectually and academically prepared for the task. His linguistic skills were superb. He translated the Bible

into what has been reputed- an excellent version in Burmese. He revised passages to improve its quality; however, two phrases rise up from history which disturb me. In the 456 page Records of the Life, Character, and Achievements of Adoniram Judson by Edward H. Fletcher 1854, we are given the insights of a friend. On page 174 we read a letter to the Reverend Dr. Sharp by Adoniram Judson (August 1823) as he was working on his revision of the New Testament: "I never read a chapter without a pencil in my hand and Griesbach and Parkhurst at my elbow." On page 447 there is another quote by the author in a sort of eulogy after Dr. Judson's death, "So thoroughly did he become familiarized with the advances and discoveries of modern biblical criticism, that when he visited his native land, his attainments were the surprise of the eminent Christian scholars." Perhaps the Burmese Bible should be looked at carefully again. It should be of great concern to us that one of the best men was so influenced by 1823, well before the effects of Westcott and Hort.

The first language in The Book of a Thousand Tongues is Abbe. Approximately 95,000 people in the Southern Ivory Coast of Africa speak Abbe. In 1967 the gospel of Mark was translated by two Methodist clergymen.

Zuni is the last named language. These are Indians in New Mexico (U.S.A.). In 1941, three men translated the Gospel of John and it was printed privately.

Arabic is widely spoken in the Middle East. It is Semitic in nature and related to Assyrian, Babylonian, Canaanite, Hebrew, and Aramaic.

There may have been some translation work done as early as the 5th century. There are numerous manuscripts from the 9th and 10th centuries. These may be found at St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, the Patriarchal Library in Cairo, the Vatican Library in Rome as well as collections in Leiden, Paris, London, and Cambridge. The 11th- 13th centuries had some translation work of unknown quality.

Starting in 1516 there was a flurry of translation work until 1706 with at least six of the seven being Roman Catholic. The next seven translations included one Roman Catholic, two British Foreign Bible Society's and the standard Protestant translation of 1860 by Van Dyke (American Bible Society). This was followed by one in 1875 by the Dominicans Order and in 1876 by the Jesuits.

I have made three preaching trips to Egypt where the Baptists still use the Van Dyke, the best we know of in Arabic. I have consulted with a Christian Egyptian medical doctor to find the meaning of Bible texts in Arabic before preaching. Many verses were subtly or openly different. He had been taught that it was the same as our King James Bible. He became convinced that it was actually closer to the New American Standard. Perhaps this situation is being addressed. If not, it certainly should be. Beside the standard Arabic most commonly used, there are eight other Arabic dialects sufficiently distinct to have their own translations.

Achoi is the language of over 300,000 in Uganda. During 1905-1914 the Gospels were translated by the Church Missionary Society (Anglican/Episcopalian) and printed by the BFBS (British Foreign Bible Society). In 1921 there was a revision with more of the New Testament added. By 1929 a Liturgical Gospels was translated and printed by Roman Catholic missionaries. In 1933 BFBS printed a complete New Testament.

Afrikaanis is used by over 23 million in South Africa. Translation did not begin until 1891 with the complete Bible coming in 1933, printed by BFBS. In 1941 the New Testament was revised (corrected?) by the BFBS. In 1953 the entire Bible was revised and printed by BFBS.

Japanese is certainly a major language of the world. In 1613 the Jesuits translated and printed the New Testament. No known copies have survived. Since then much work has been done with comments, i.e. conformed to Greek, colloquial, etc.

Chinese has at least 25 dialects with the Bible translation accomplished.

German has Luther's translation revealing a doctrinal viewpoint of his. Repentance is translated "do penance." This type of problem occurs in various languages.

Dr. Barnhouse defended the use of the RSV for responsive reading of the Psalms. He maintained that the RSV was as good or better than what missionaries have in most languages. Instead of a defense, I think it was an indictment of the corruption in other languaged Bibles. For generations this has been allowed to occur while we have spent our time on other issues.

What can one individual do? Let us look at a man in the 1800's, Louis Lucien Bonaparte. He was the son of Lucien, the second brother of Napoleon. As a prince he studied languages, and translated, or oversaw translators. Further, he printed at his own expense portions of the scriptures in more than 60 language dialects of European and Russian origin! If a lost man could do this for purely educational purposes, what shall we do for Christ's sake?