OOOPS, DOES IT REALLY SAY THAT?

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Category: English Bibles

When we received our copy of the Kouya New Testament, it took me ages before I dared open it, fearing that I would find a major typo on the first page I looked at. (I didn't, by the way).Â Translating the BIble is a huge task and there are so many things that you have to take into account; accurately expressing the original language, using clear and accurate target language, getting the spelling right, not dropping a verse here or there and so the list goes on...

Better Bibles Blog has republished a good discussion on the ESV by Mark Strauss (start reading here) which includes a section where there ESV, by sticking close to form of Greek has ended up with English that is more than a little ambiguous.

> *Rock badgers are people too!*
> ***Prov. 30:26 ESV*** *â€œthe ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer; rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs;â€*
> ***Comment:*** *In addition to the tortured word order, the ESVâ€™s use of â€œpeopleâ€ is very strange. We sometimes joke that animals are people too, but surely ants and rock badgers are â€œcreaturesâ€ or â€œspecies,â€ not people.*
>
> *Showing off the flesh*
> *Gal. 6:12* ***ESV*** *It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh who would force you to be circumcisedâ€¦.*
> ***Comment:*** *â€œA good showing in the fleshâ€ sounds like a bikini contest.*

If you just want to read the 'ooops' section of the paper, you can find it here.

This may sound a little flippant to you, but the serious point that it highlights is that trying to stick to the way that the original language expresses things will always lead to ambiguities in translation. There is a time and a place for literal translations, but the intendant problems have to be acknowledged and addressed. To simply say (as many do) that a literal translation is more accurate than a dynamic one is simply not true - unless Paul really was talking about a bikini contest (which would lead to a revolution in Pauline scholarship).