YET ANOTHER STRANGE BIBLE TRANSLATION

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Category: English Bibles

Yet again, I find myself looking at something that calls itself a translation of the Bible and wondering whether to ignore it and hope it will go away, or drawing attention to it so that people can see how wrong it is. Following hard on the heels of the American Patriot's Bible (which is devastatingly reviewed here) is the Conservative Bible.

Apparently as of 2009 there is no Conservative Bible translation into English which fulfills a rigorous set of criteria including:

- dealing with liberal or random dilution of the meaning of biblical terms, like the term "word" in the first verse of the Gospel of John
- explaining the numerous economic parables with their full free-market meaning

It is true that students of John struggle with capturing the best way to express the force of the Greek word *logos* which is generally translated 'word' in English versions.Â However, I've never come across a serious scholar who suggests that the choice of term here is based on political expedience.

I also love the bit about the free-market meaning of the parables.Â I'm not sure who sayings about rich men, camels and the eye of a needle, selling all you have and giving it to the poor, or gaining the whole world, but forfeiting your soul fit into a free market paradigm - but they certainly fit into Jesus teaching.

The methodology of the translation is an interesting one:

> *In the United States and much of the world, the immensely popular and respected King James Version (KJV) is freely available and in the public domain. It could be used as the baseline for developing a conservative translation without requiring a license or any fees. Where the KJV is known to be deficient due to discovery of more authentic sources, exceptions can be made that use either more modern public domain translations as a baseline, or by using the original Greek or Hebrew.*

So this isn't actually a translation, but only an update of the King James. The only time that the Greek or Hebrew would be used is when 'more authentic sources have been discovered'. Reading further on gives you an idea of what is meant by 'more authentic'.

> *The earliest, most authentic manuscripts lack this verse set forth at Luke 23:34:*
>
> *Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*
>
> *Is this a liberal corruption of the original? This does not appear in any other Gospel, and the simple fact is that some of the persecutors of Jesus **did** know what they were doing. This*

> *quotation is a favorite of liberals but should not appear in a conservative Bible.*

It is true that many early manuscripts don't include Luke 23:34.Â According to Marshall:

> *The balance of the evidence thus favours acceptance of the saying as Lucan, although the weight of the textual evidence against the saying precludes any assurance in opting for this verdict.*

In other words, this is almost certainly something that Luke wrote (which is why all of the major translations of the Scriptures include it) but we cannot be 100% certain. Even if the verse was not original in this context, the principle that it embodies - forgiving those who do us ill - is embodied in all of Christ's teaching. Fascinatingly, very similar words occur in Acts 7:60 (also written by Luke) when Stephen asks God to forgive those who are stoning him to death. There is no doubt about the text in Acts. However, what is clear in this is that the discussion is not really about the quality of the texts behind the Bible, it is that the Bible says something that the author doesn't like. "This quotation is a favorite of liberals but should not appear in a conservative Bible." In other words, I don't agree with it, so it shouldn't be in the Bible.

> *Socialistic terminology permeates English translations of the Bible, without justification. This improperly encourages the "social justice" movement among Christians.*
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> *For example, the conservative word "volunteer" is mentioned only once in the ESV, yet the socialistic word "comrade" is used three times, "laborer(s)" is used 13 times, "labored" 15 times, and "fellow" (as in "fellow worker") is used 55 times.*

Well the social justice movement is encouraged among Christians by books such as Amos and the practice of the early Church of holding all things in common, but we'll let that one pass. The word volunteer is only mentioned once in the ESV because the concept only occurs once in the Bible. Likewise, labourer and fellow are used frequently in English translations because these are concepts which occur regularly in the original manuscripts. How careless of God to inspire a Bible that includes 'socialistic terms'.

I don't care if you are liberal, conservative or of any other persuasion; translating the Scriptures is a sacred task and we must aim to do so accurately and with a full respect for the original documents. The Scriptures will always challenge our political, social and cultural norms. To change the Bible to fit our own views, whatever those views are, is a very dangerous game.

Paul wrote about people like this in 2 Timothy 4:3,4

> *For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching.*

> *They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths. (NLT)*