NT WRIGHT ON BIBLE TRANSLATION

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"The question of translating scripture had already been faced when scribes, after the exile in Babylon, â€˜interpretedâ€™ the ancient Hebrew scriptures into Aramaic so the ordinary people could understand it. It was then faced even more directly by those who, somewhere between one and three hundred years before Jesusâ€™ day, translated Israelâ€™s scriptures from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek. Christianity was born into a world where biblical translation was already an established fact. There was little sense, as there is in the stricter forms of Islam, that the sacred language was the â€˜real thingâ€™ and that translation meant desecration."
Category: Observations

> *When the Spirit comes, the followers of Jesus are able to tell people about Godâ€™s powerful deeds in their own languages. Christianity has been a translating faith from the outset.*

I've just come across an excellent paper by Tom Wright in which he discusses Bible translation as a discipline and his own work as a translator. There is a lot of good stuff and you should read the whole paper. However, for those who don't have time, are too lazy or who aren't very interested in translation, here are a few quotes:

> *Translating the message into the worldâ€™s many languages is therefore organically linked to the central claim of the gospel itself. Not to translate might imply, perhaps, that Jesus belonged, or belonged specially, to one group only â€“ a dangerous idea which some of the earliest New Testament writings strongly opposed. The fact that the New Testament is written in Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic, tells its own story: this, the early writers were saying by clear implication, is the Jewish message for the whole world. To translate is to imply that, just as the gospel of Jesus is for all people, so the early Christian writings which bear witness to Jesus are for all people.Â No doubt all human languages will find it a challenge, this way or that, to express in their own idiom what the early Christians were trying to say in theirs. Losing things in translation will always be a risk. But itâ€™s a risk we recognise. It is the same risk that all Christians face when they try to express their loyalty to Jesus in their own particular lives and situations. Translation is difficult, but it is the same sort of difficulty as we face in discipleship itself.*

I love the honesty of this short quote:

> *Translation is bound to distort. But not to translate, and not to upgrade English translations quite frequently, is to collude with a different and perhaps worse kind of distortion. Yesterdayâ€™s words may sound fine, but they may not say any longer what they used to say.*