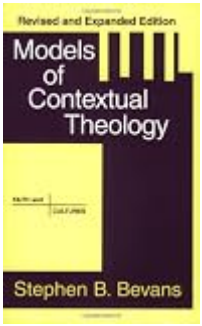
BEVANS ON TRANSLATION

Posted on February 17, 2015 by Eddie

Words carry much more than denotative meanings; the are the vehicles of all sorts of emotional and cultural connotations as well. Languages such as Hebrew, from which one translates the Bible and Ilokano, into which on translates, do not have the same ideas of subject, verb, object voice as do western languages such as Latin or German or English.
Category: Bible Translation



"When we speak of translation in this chapter, we do not have in mind a literal word-for-word translation. This is what Charles Kraft speaks of as translation by formal correspondence, and examples might be a translation of the EnglishÂ *table* into the LatinÂ *mensa,Â* the ItalianÂ *tavolo*, the SpanishÂ *mesa*, the GermanÂ *Tisch*, or the Ilokano *lamisaan*. People have such a literal translation model in mind when they ask what might be the Filipino equivalent of the GreekÂ *homoousios* so that Filipinos might be able to express exactly what the Council of Chalcedon meant in its famous Christological definition or how one might renderÂ *Being* in a language such as Japanese.

A formal-correspondance approach to translation can never get at the deep structures of a language which are more than simple vocabulary and grammar correspondances. Words carry much more than denotative meanings; the are the vehicles of all sorts of emotional and cultural connotations as well. Languages such as Hebrew, from which one translates the Bible and Ilokano, into which on translates, do not have the same ideas of subject, verb, object voice as do western languages such as Latin or German or English. As Kraft observes:

> *Word-for-word translation and the consistency principle are, however, the result of misunderstandings of the nature of langauge and of the translation process itself. The results of such emphases tend to be wooden and foreign-sounding. The literalists' focus sees but dimly the livingness of the original encoding of the message. Furthermore, it often ignores completely the contemporary cultural and linguistic involvement of any but the most theologically indoctrinated of the readers. Its aim is to be "faithful to the original documents." But this "faithfulness" centres almost exclusively on the surface-level forms of the linguistic encoding in the source langauge and their literal transference into corresponding linguistic forms in the receptor language. "*

FromÂ MODELS OF CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY (Faith and Cultures Series)Â by Stephen Bevans