BIBLE TRANSLATIONS:
THE LINK BETWEEN EXEGESIS
AND EXPOSITORY PREACHING[1]

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Expository preaching presupposes the goal of teaching an audience the meaning of the passage on which the sermon is based. Two types of Bible translations are available as "textbooks" the preacher may use in accomplishing this task. One type follows the original languages of Scripture in form and vocabulary insofar as possible without doing violence to English usage. The other type is not so much governed by phraseology in the original languages, but accommodates itself to contemporary usage of the language into which the translation is made. It is possible with a fair degree of objectivity to measure how far each translation deviates from the original languages. The greater degree of deviation inevitably reflects a higher proportion of interpretation on the translator's part. Regardless of the accuracy of the interpretation, the preacher will at times disagree with it and have to devote valuable sermon time to correcting the text. The best choice of translations on which to base expository preaching is, therefore, one which more literally follows the original languages and excludes as much human interpretation as possible.

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English versions of the Bible can be classified in different ways. They can be classified in regard to historical origin, in regard to textual basis, in regard to theological bias, and in regard to usage of the English language. These areas of consideration are not without relevance to exegesis and expository preaching, but for purposes of the current study, a fifth classification will be examined, that of the

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philosophies of translation used in producing Bible versions.[2]

This category of analysis is chosen because of its very close connection with exegesis and exposition. In such an investigation as this these two terms, exegesis and exposition, must be clearly defined. "Exegesis" is the critical or technical application of hermeneutical principles to a biblical text in the original language with a view to the exposition or declaration of its meaning. "Exposition" is defined as a discourse setting forth the meaning of a passage in a popular form. It is roughly synonymous with expository preaching. In a comparison of these two it is to be noted that exegesis is more foundational and more critically and technically oriented. Exposition is based upon exegesis and has in view a more popular audience. The exposition under consideration here is public and spoken exposition rather than written exposition.

In the practice of exposition or expository preaching it is assumed that the preacher's goals include the teaching of his passage's meaning to the audience.[3] Such teaching points out items in the text which are obvious, but may never have been noticed. It also calls attention to items which may be completely hidden from the reader of an English translation. It will, in addition, explain passages which are difficult to interpret. In the process of imparting new teaching the expositor will remind his listeners of truth previously learned too. Based on all this instruction, the preacher will apply the principles of his passage to listeners with a view to producing spiritual growth and transformation in their lives.

It is obvious that the above aims are much more attainable if the congregation has an English version of the Bible in which to follow the sermon, preferably the same translation as that used by the leader of the meeting. The question to be addressed in the following discussion is, with what type of translation can the minister of the Word best accomplish his goals? In other words, what kind of connecting link between exegesis and exposition is the most desirable? Stated still another way, what type of textbook is most advantageous for use in the practice of expository preaching?

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[2]For a summary of all five areas in which translations may be classified, see Robert L. Thomas, *An Introductory Guide for Choosing English Bible Translations* (Sun Valley, CA: author, 1988).

[3]W. C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 18-19.

TWO PHILOSOPHIES OF TRANSLATION

In search for an answer to this question about the kind of version needed, it is necessary first to understand in some detail, features of the two major philosophies of translation.

One philosophy focuses most attention on the original text or the source of the translation. This is called the literal or formal equivalence method of translation. The other is more concerned with the target[4] audience of the translation. This is referred to as the free or dynamic equivalence method of translation. A literal translation seeks a word-for-word equivalency, trying also to retain the grammatical structure of the original insofar as the destination language will permit. A free translation aims for communicative effectiveness or an effect upon the reader in the receptor language comparable to that produced upon the original readers and listeners.[5]

According to dynamic-equivalence advocates literal translations, which are, for the most part, the traditional and older ones, have not allowed adequately for cultural and social factors which affect readers

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[4]Glassman suggests that "target" is no longer acceptable to designate the language into which a translation is made, because it suggests shooting a communication at a target and treats communication as a one-way street instead of expecting a response. He prefers "receptor" to stress the fact that a language has to be decoded by those to whom it is directed (E. H. Glassman, *The Translation Debate: What Makes a Bible Translation Good?* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981] 48).

[5]J. P. Lewis, *The English Bible/From KJV to NIV* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 279; S. Kubo and W. F. Specht, *So Many Versions?* (rev. and enlarged ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 341-43; F. F. Bruce, *History of the English Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1978) 233. J. P. M. Walsh ("Contemporary English Translations of Scripture," *TS* 50/2 [June 1989] 336-38) finds the motivation behind dynamic equivalence laudable: a zeal for souls and a desire to make the riches of Scripture available to all. Yet he notices a troublesome underlying premise, that there is a message which "can be disengaged from the concrete, historically and culturally determined forms in which it was originally expressed, and gotten across to readers in other forms, equally determined by history and culture, which are different from those of the original text. . . . The truth of the Bible exists . . . in a certain embodiment, but that embodiment is of no real importance." He feels that this premise of dynamic equivalence carries almost a "gnostic" aura.

of a translation.[6]   The formal-equivalence advocate responds that the translator of a free translation has not shown sufficient respect for the inspired text.[7]

Translating freely is not a new idea. Jerome who produced the Latin Vulgate at the end of the fourth century purposed to translate the sense, not the words of the original whenever translating anything other than Scripture.[8] John Purvey, an associate of John Wycliffe, expressed much the same sentiment in the late fourteenth century when he said that the unit in translation cannot be the word, but at the very least the clause or sentence.[9] Yet the degree of freedom advocated by these scholars is inapplicable to many modern English versions. Jerome did not apply these standards to the Vulgate, and the second edition of the Wycliffe version in which Purvey was most influential, would now be classed as a literal translation. A major breakthrough in free translating came at the very beginning of this twentieth century with the

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[6]J. Van Bruggen, *The Future of the Bible* (Nashville: Nelson, 1978) 69. Some are so avidly committed to the dynamic equivalence approach that they are extravagantly critical of formal equivalence. They deny its ability to communicate anything to the average person. Glassman is typical of this extreme when he writes, "Every example I could give of formal correspondence translation would simply reinforce the point that, for the most part, it does not communicate to the ordinary person today, if indeed it ever did" (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 50-51). This picture of formal equivalence is grossly misleading   To represent this approach as non-communicative is to erect a "straw man" that does not resemble the actual situation even faintly. Kohlenberger is also guilty of painting such a distorted picture of literal translation (J. R. Kohlenberger, III, *Words about the Word: A Guide to Choosing and Using Your Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987] 63). Carson joins the others in crass exaggeration, if not outright error, when he writes, "There is widespread recognition of the dismal inadequacy of merely formal equivalence in translation, butressed [sic] by thousands and thousands of examples" (D. A. Carson, "The Limits of Dynamic Equivalence in Bible Translation," *Notes on Translation* 121 [Oct 1987] 1, rept. from *Evangelical Review of Theology* 9/3 [July 1985]).

[7]Van Bruggen, *Future* p. 81.

[8]P. Schaff and H. Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), VI, 113; Lewis, *English Bible* 233; Harvey Minkoff, "Problems of Translations: Concern for the Text Versus Concern for the Reader," *Bible Review* 4/4 (Aug 1988) 35-36.

[9]Bruce, *History* 19, 238; D. Ewert, *From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983) 185.

publication of the Twentieth Century New Testament. Though trans-
lated by those of a basically non-scholarly orientation, this project paved
the way for a flow of scholarly works geared more to modern English
practice than to the precise wording of the original text.[10] These have
included undertakings by Weymouth, Moffatt, Goodspeed, and Knox as
well as the New English Bible and the Good News Bible.

    In connection with the last of these there finally developed a
philosophical rationale for what the free translator had been doing for
many decades already.[11] It was at this point that the title "dynamic
equivalence" was applied to the practice.[12] Many of the principles of
modern communications theory were then integrated into translation
practice.

    Side-by-side with the newer emphasis in translation, the
traditional philosophy of literal translation, labeled "formal equivalence"
and then "formal correspondence" by the theorists of the American
Bible Society,[13] continues to present its candidates: the Revised Stan-
dard Version, the Modern Language Bible, the New American Standard
Bible, the New American Bible, and the New King James Version.

    Among English translations the roots of this philosophy are deep.
The first English translation done by associates of John Wycliffe was a
very literal translation, corresponding word-for-word whenever possible
with the Latin text on which they based their translation.[14]   The
principle of literality was observed so scrupulously in the Douai-Rheims
version that the English product is unintelligible in some places. The
goal of the King James Version translators was to be "as consonant as
possible to the original Hebrew and Greek."[15]

    The contemporary preacher is thus faced with a choice between
these two types of English translations. The reaction of some might be

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[10]Bruce, *History* 153-54.

[11]E. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964) 159-60, 166-76.

[12]Bruce, *History* 233.

[13]Nida, *Toward a Science* 159-60, 165-66; W. L. Wonderly, *Bible Translations for Popular Use* (London: United Bible Societies, 1968) 50-51.

[14]Bruce, *History* 14-15.

[15]Van Bruggen, *Future* 27.

to question whether there is that much difference between the two. They would want to know whether the differences are measurable. Of interest also is the nature of the differences and how they affect expository preaching.

MEASUREMENT OF DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN FREE AND LITERAL TRANSLATIONS

Evaluations of translations in regard to the philosophies of their translation techniques have usually been general in nature, such as "The NEB is a free translation, tending to paraphrase and, in some instances, to wordiness."[16] "The NIV is also too free in its translation."[17]   "The NASB is a literal approach to the translation of the Scriptures."[18] "The NAB is more faithful to the original than is either the JB or the NEB."[19] The Modern Language Bible sought to avoid paraphrase, and so is a "fairly literal" translation.[20]

General appraisals such as these are helpful as far as they go, but are at best vague in their connotation and at worst open to question as to their accuracy. Can they be made more definitive and defensible? In other words, can tests of dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence be applied to various versions so that equivalency of effect and conformity to the original can be measured? The answer in the case of dynamic equivalence is a qualified "no," and that in regard to formal equivalence is "yes."

Testing the communicative effectiveness of translations and thereby determining their degrees of dynamic equivalence is a very inexact task. According to Nida, a translation should stimulate in a reader in his native language the same mood, impression, or reaction to itself that the original writing sought to stimulate in its first readers.[21]

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[16]Lewis, *English Bible* 153-54.

[17]Van Bruggen, *Future* 149.

[18]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 230.

[19]Lewis, *English Bible* 222.

[20]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 92.

[21]Nida, *Toward a Science* 156, 164.

This is an unattainable goal and one that can be only approximately achieved.[22] Impressions of different people will vary widely after reading the same biblical passage. Also "equivalent effect" is difficult to quantify, because no one in modern times knows with certainty what the effect on the original readers and listeners was. To assume that a writing was always clear to them as is frequently done is precarious.[23] Yet tests have been devised to measure how well modern readers comprehend what they read. One of the most successful of these is called the "Cloze Technique."[24] It consists of reproducing portions of literature with words intentionally omitted at regular intervals. A representative group of people who are unfamiliar with the literature are given these portions and asked to insert the missing words. On the basis of their success in doing so, statistical data are compiled on the readability of the literature in question. By using comparable sections of different English versions, one can formulate an estimate of the comparative communicative effectiveness of these versions.

The limitations of this test are several. They center in the difficulty of assembling a sufficiently representative group of people.[25] Vocabulary aptitudes vary widely even among members of the same family. Backgrounds and experiences differ to the point that members of the same socio-educational group reflect wide discrepancies in scoring on such a test. Devising a pattern of meaningful results is next to impossible because of the extreme subjectivity of the quantity or quality being tested.

The test of formal equivalence is more successful, however. It is a test of "deviation values." First formulated by Wonderly,[26] this

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[22]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 174-75.

[23]Van Bruggen, *Future* 112.

[24]Nida, *Toward a Science* 140; Wonderly, *Bible Translations* 203-5. Kohlenberger mentions two other tests which have been used to measure readability, one a battery of language comprehension tests prepared by Dwight Chappell during the 1970s and the other called the Fog Readability Index (Kohlenberger, *Words* 60-61).

[25]Wonderly, *Bible Translations* 204-5.

[26]Cited by Nida, *Toward a Science* 184-92.

procedure consists of five steps.[27]

The first of these steps is to take a passage of suitable length, say from thirty to fifty Hebrew or Greek words, and number the words consecutively.

Secondly, each word is translated into its nearest English equivalent, in accord with standard lexical tools. This stage, known as the "literal transfer," is carried out without rearranging the word order. In cases where alternative English renderings are possible, both possibilities are included. The consecutive numbers from step one remain in their proper sequence. Of course, the result of this step is incomprehensible English. Nevertheless, this is an important intermediate stage.

The third step consists of changing the English word order and making any other changes necessary to produce a readable English format. Changes thus made are kept to a minimum, being only those absolutely necessary to make the sense of the English comprehensible. This process is known as the "minimal transfer." In this rearrangement each word or phrase retains its original sequential number, the result being that the numbers no longer fall into their previous consecutive sequence. The result of this step is called the "closest equivalent" translation. This closest equivalent constitutes a standard to which various published translations may be compared.

The fourth part of procedure for determining deviation values of English versions is the comparison of these versions, one by one, with the closest equivalent translation in the section of Scripture under consideration. Such a comparison will reflect five types of differences: changes in word order, omissions from the text, lexical alterations, syntactical alterations,[28] and additions to the text. Each time a translation differs from the closest equivalent, an appropriate numerical value is assigned, depending upon the degree of difference between the two. When the values for the five kinds of differences are totaled, a deviation value for the section is established. From this deviation value

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[27]Wonderly's approach has been altered slightly so as to facilitate a more detailed analysis, as will be explained in step four below.

[28]Wonderly has one category, "structural alterations," in place of the two categories, "lexical alterations" and "syntactical alterations," which are suggested here. It is proposed that this further division encourages a more definitive examination of the differences that are of this nature. Lexical and syntactical matters are somewhat distinct from each other.

for the thirty to fifty words is extrapolated a deviation value per one hundred words.

The fifth and last step is to repeat the whole process in other passages, until a sufficient sampling of the whole book is obtained. The deviation values from all the passages are then averaged together to obtain a single deviation value per one hundred words for the whole book. This can be done for each book of the Bible in any selected version.
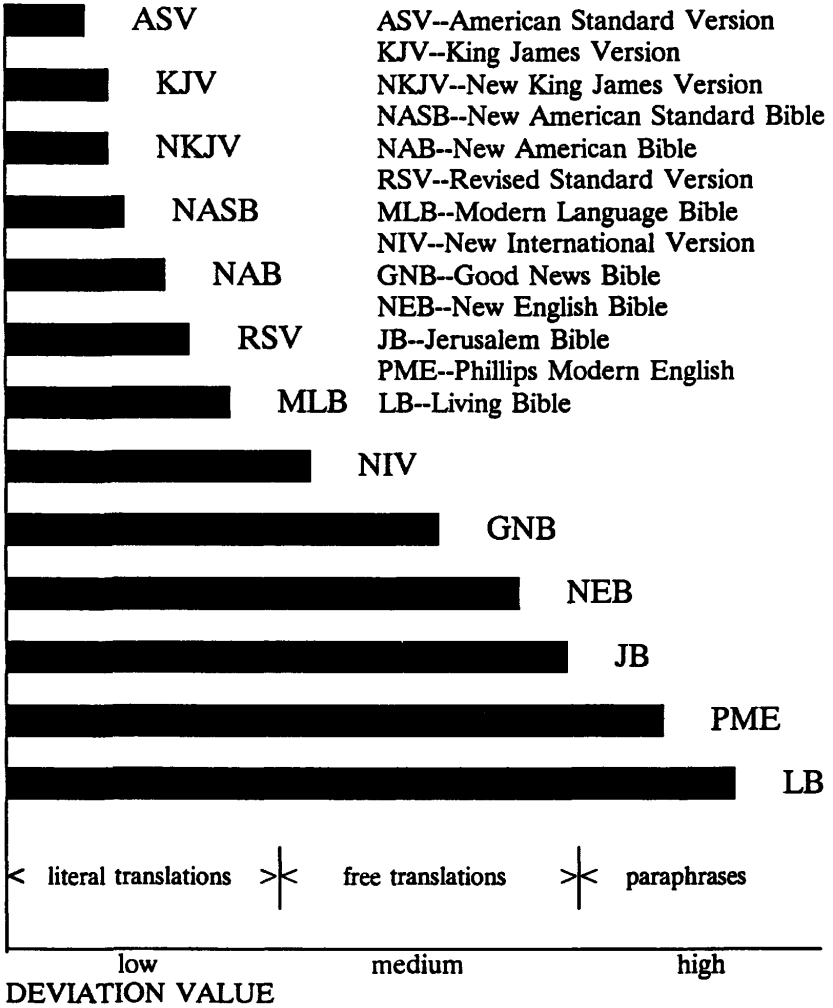
The deviation values obtained through this test have no significance as absolute quantities, but when the value for one version is compared to that of another, the versions that are closer to the original text can be identified, as can the versions that differ more extensively from the original.

From such relationships as these a diagram can be constructed to reflect the profile of each English translation in relation to the others.[29]   A range of deviation values for literal translations, free translations, and paraphrases[30] can also be established to show in which category each translation belongs and how it compares with other translations within the same category.

[See Figure 1.]

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[29]The above discussion views translations as deviating from the text of the source language in varying degrees. Glassman represents a group who see the two approaches to translation, not from the perspective of relative closeness to the original text, but from the standpoint of being two approaches to translation which are entirely different in kind (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 47-48). He appears to be saying, in other words, that dynamic equivalence makes no attempt to represent the individual words or syntactical constructions of the original. The dynamic-equivalence translator rather interprets the *meaning* of the text and proceeds to express that meaning in whatever words and constructions may seem appropriate to him.

[30]Beekman and Callow refrain from using "paraphrase" to describe the results of their dynamic equivalence translations because of the pejorative connotation it carries in the minds of most Christians (John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974] 21). Because of a more technical connotation of the word found in linguistic circles, however, Glassman uses "paraphrase" without apology to describe legitimate translation technique (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 27).

		ASV--American Standard Version

ASV

KJV

NKJV

NASB

NAB

RSV

MLB

NIV

GNB

NEB

JB

PME

LB

ASV--American Standard Version
KJV--King James Version
NKJV--New King James Version
NASB--New American Standard Bible
NAB--New American Bible
RSV--Revised Standard Version
MLB--Modern Language Bible
NIV--New International Version
GNB--Good News Bible
NEB--New English Bible
JB--Jerusalem Bible
PME--Phillips Modern English
LB--Living Bible

< literal translations >|< free translations >|< paraphrases

low   medium   high
DEVIATION VALUE

DEVIATION VALUES IN ROMANS

Figure 1

A comment is needed about the dividing point between literal and free translations and about that between free translations and paraphrases. These are somewhat arbitrary, but not completely. The NIV is taken as the bottom of the range of free translations because of its own claim to follow the method of dynamic equivalence.[31]   Yet it is more literal than other versions which are also based on the dynamic equivalence principle. Phillips Modern English is taken as the bottom of the range of paraphrases because Phillips' initial purpose was not to produce something that would be scrutinized as closely as a translation.[32]

The advantage of this test is that it lends a degree of objectivity to general evaluations of the various versions.   For example, when Lewis says that the Jerusalem Bible is rather paraphrastic in nature,[33] we would take issue with him on the basis of its difference from Phillips. While the JB is one of the freest of the free translations, it is not so free as to be called a paraphrase. We would likewise question the propriety of Kubo and Specht in calling the New English Bible "paraphrastic."[34]   Though these reviewers may be correct about some of its renderings, the translators claimed to have refrained from paraphrase,[35] and an application of the deviation test places the NEB well within the category of free translations.

On the other hand, when Lewis says that the NIV uses "dynamic

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[31]"Preface," *New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) viii; cf. R. G. Bratcher, "The New International Version," *The Word of God* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982) 162. Kohlenberger seems to classify the NIV as a "basically F-E" (i.e. formal equivalence) translation (Kohlenberger, *Words* 93), while at the same time referring to its "fluid D-E style" (Kohlenberger, *Words* 92).   His appraisal is puzzling. Probably the NIV should be classed as D-E because its translators sought to convey "the meaning of the writers" which they deem to be more than a "word-for word translation" which retains "thought patterns and syntax" of the original.

[32]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 80-81.

[33]Lewis, *English Bible* 206.

[34]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 211.

[35]C. H. Dodd, "Introduction to the New Testament," *New English Bible* (New York: Oxford, 1971) vii.

equivalence" renderings in a number of places[36] or that the NEB is a free translation or when Kubo and Specht say that the New American Standard Bible and Modern Language Bible are literal translations,[37] the accuracy of their words is borne out. Lewis is also correct when he says that the New American Bible is more faithful to the original than the Jerusalem Bible or the New English Bible.[38]

Bruce is almost correct when he states that the NASB retains the precision in rendering that made the ASV of such great value as a handbook for students.[39] A comparison of deviation values for the two reflects that actually the ASV is more literal than the NASB, but that the NASB still falls low in the range of deviation values set for literal versions. In other words, Lewis' opinion is confirmed: the NASB is relatively literal, but is not entirely free from paraphrasing.[40] Van Bruggen is also proven correct when he notes the distinct difference in literality between the King James Version, Revised Standard Version, and New American Standard Version on the one hand, and the New International Version, Good News Bible, and the Living Bible on the other.[41]

Deviation values can be used in a variety of ways to detect translation trends. For example, a comparison of deviation values for different books reflects differing degrees of deviation within the same version. When a different translator is assigned to each book, subsequent reviews by committees notwithstanding, there is a good chance that a given version will vary from book to book in its deviation values. The Jerusalem Bible is a case in point. In Romans it is close to the top in deviation value among free translations, but in 1 Corinthians its value locates it at the bottom of that range.

[See Figure 2.]
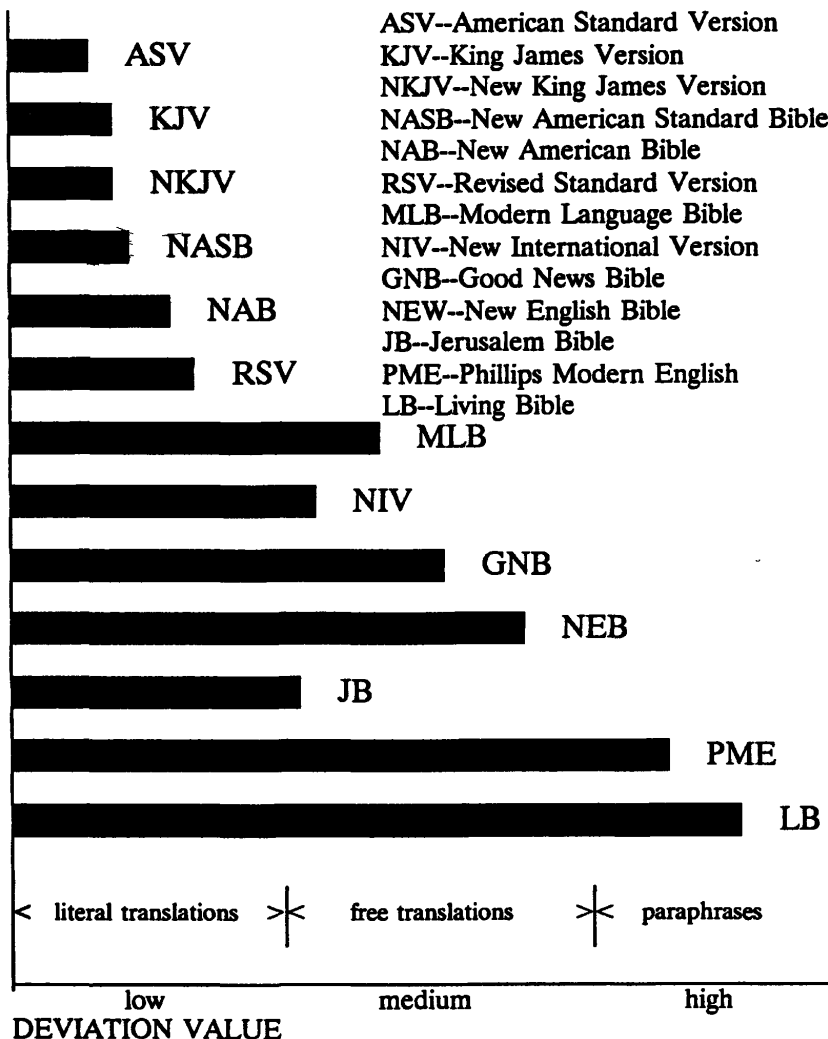
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[36]Lewis, *English Bible* 321-22.

[37]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 92, 230.

[38]Lewis, *English Bible* 222.

[39]Bruce, *History* 259.

[40]Lewis, *English Bible* 182-83.

[41]Van Bruggen, *Future* 192.

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PME

LB

< literal translations >< free translations >< paraphrases

low   medium   high
DEVIATION VALUE

DEVIATION VALUES IN 1 CORINTHIANS

Figure 2

Kubo and Specht are right when they observe that it is not a homogeneous translation.[42]   The same observation applies to the Modern Language Bible when comparing deviation values in the two books.

Another point to be made is that a line between literal translations and those that are free cannot be precisely drawn.   Therefore, there is not a great deal of difference between a translation at the top of the literal range and one at the bottom of the free range.   For example, the philosophy behind the RSV is not radically different from that of the NIV even though the former is classed as literal and the latter as free.   On the other hand, there is significant difference between a translation in the lower range of literal, such as the ASV, and one in the lower range of free translations.

Of further interest are the deviation values of versions in the Tyndale tradition.

[See Figure 3.]

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[42]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 161.

TYNDALE (1526)

GREAT BIBLE (1539)

BISHOPS' BIBLE (1568)

KING JAMES VERSION (1611)

ENGLISH REVISED VERSION (1881) - ASV (1901)

REVISED STANDARD VERSION (1946)

NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE (1963)

NEW KING JAMES VERSION (1979)

< literal translations >< free translations >< paraphrases

low   medium   high
DEVIATION VALUE
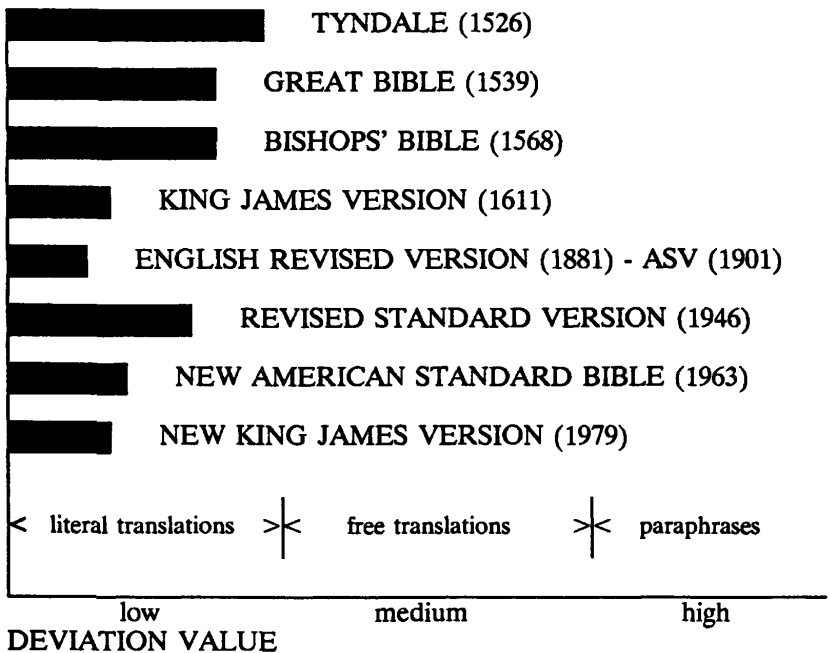
DEVIATION VALUES IN ROMANS

Figure 3

Tyndale's work was near the top of the literal translation range, but subsequent revisions moved closer and closer to the zero base, until the twentieth century. Since then, they have increased.

INTERPRETATION AS A FACTOR IN TRANSLATION

The above discussion of degrees of deviation from the form of the original text raises a question about what factor or factors account for the higher deviation of some versions in comparison with others. In more general terms, what are distinctives of free translations and paraphrases that set them apart from literal translations?

The largest single distinction lies in the area of interpretation.

To be sure, some interpretation must accompany any translation effort.[43]   In this connection Barclay is right,[44] and the editor of the *Churchman* is wrong in saying that translation and interpretation must be kept rigidly separate.[45]   For example, one cannot translate 1 Cor 7:36-38 without adopting a view as to whether the passage is referring to the virgin's father or to her male companion.   Still, the largest difference between translations of a relatively low deviation value and those of a high value lies in the quantity of interpretation behind the renderings.   In free translations and paraphrases this element is, as a rule, substantially higher.[46]

This highlights a difficulty inherent in free translation and para-phrase. The translator must choose one interpretation from the possi-ble alternatives, thus leaving the English reader at the mercy of his choice.[47]   The translator of a literal translation can often retain the ambiguity of the original text and thus allow the English reader to interpret for himself.[48]

For example, the reader of Gal 5:12 in the New King James

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[43]Ewert, *Ancient Tablets* 259.

[44]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 163.

[45]Ibid., 170.

[46]Ewert, *Ancient Tablets* 259. The step of translation where the interpretation of the translator is incorporated is called "analysis." He is responsible to perform a thorough exegetical examination of the passage to be translated to discover what it meant to the ones who first read and heard it (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 59-61).   Properly fulfilled, this responsibility entails the implementation of the grammatical-historical method of interpretation.   Having accomplished this, he transfers the meaning to the receptor language and restructures it in the form that he conceives will be most palatable to the recipients in the new language.

[47]Lewis, *English Bible* 133.

[48]Ambiguity is studiously avoided in the dynamic equivalence approach. The translator's responsibility is viewed as one of giving intelligible meaning to everything he translates, even passages over which the best exegetes have struggled for centuries (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 101-11; cf. Carson, "The Limits" 7). The alleged need to do this stems from a low estimation of the English reader's ability or motivation to study the passage for himself. It becomes a sort of spoon-feeding approach to translation where nothing is left to the initiative of the user of the translation.

Bible will need the help of a commentary to understand the verse.[49]
What does it mean, "I could wish that those who trouble you would
even cut themselves off"? The readers of free translations and para-
phrases will not need a commentary, however, because translators have
interpreted for them. In the GNB, NIV, JB, and NEB "cutting off" is
interpreted as referring to a deprivation of the male reproductive
glands.[50] In the PME and the LB, a different interpretation is adopted.
The statement is made to mean separation from the Christian assembly.
     The added responsibility of a dynamic-equivalence translator is
made apparent by this comparison. He has also become a commen-
tator. It is to this added role that some have objected.[51] Without
acknowledging that he has done so, such a translator has attached his
own personal interpretation to the text, thereby excluding from the
reader a consideration of the other possible meanings of the text. A
literal translation can, on the other hand, often leave the same obscurity
in the English text as is found in the original.
     Similar dilemmas arise in numerous passages.[52] Which interpre-
tation is right in 1 Thess 4:4, the one which says that Paul speaks of
control over one's own body as in the JB, NEB, NIV, PME, or that
which says that he speaks of taking a wife in marriage as in the LB,
RSV, and GNB? Or should the translator shun the responsibility of
making a choice as in the KJV, the NKJV, and the NASB?
     Does 1 Tim 3:2 prohibit appointment of an overseer who is a
bigamist, as strongly implied by the NIV, LB, PME, and the GNB

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[49]Lewis, *English Bible* 360.

[50]Actually a further refinement in meaning between the renderings of this
group of versions lies in whether they adopt the English rendering of "castrate,"
"emasculate," or "mutilate." The last of the three is the most severe, involving the
whole body, and the first is the least severe, involving only the reproductive
capability. A precise interpretation of the text entails a determination of which
of these was in Paul's mind as he wrote.

[51]E.g. Van Bruggen, *Future* 105-9. Kohlenberger recognizes the problem of
the excessive-commentary element in versions such as the Amplified Bible, the
Living Bible, and Wuest's Expanded Translation (Kohlenberger, *Words* 66-67), but
he is apparently oblivious to its presence in the NIV.

[52]Robert P. Martin, *Accuracy of Translation and The New International Version*
(Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989) 41-62, furnishes additional examples
of interpretations presented as translations.

through the addition of the word "only"? Or does it forbid appointment
of a man who is a divorcee, as the JB indicates? Perhaps the verse
speaks of the quality of faithfulness without dealing with marital history,
as is the choice of the NEB? But maybe the decision in this matter
should be left to the expositor or the English reader, as indicated by the
noncommittal rendering of the KJV, NKJV, RSV, and NASB.

Kubo and Specht and Lewis are among those who seriously
question whether a translator has the right to read his own interpre-
tations into the text.[53] They would be joined by many in this objection
when the translator's interpretations are blatantly wrong. Such is the
case when the GNB refers to Christ as "the great descendant of David"
rather than "the root of David" in Rev 5:5.[54] The NEB commits the
same error in calling Him "the Scion of David." Both of these
renderings preclude a reference to Christ's pre-existence that is latent
in the Greek. In John 1:1 Moffatt's "the Logos was divine" and the
GNB's "he was the same as God" both miss the point that the verse
intends to teach the Deity of the Word.[55]

Some translations have evidenced an awareness of the problem
of excessive interpretation in succeeding editions of their works. For
example, the RSV in earlier editions gave "married only once" in 1
Tim 3:2, but in the 1959 edition they changed back to "the husband of
one wife." Phillips has also removed some of the extreme interpretive
elements in a more recent edition of PME.[56] The 1978 edition of the
NIV is more literal and less interpretive than the 1973 edition.[57]

THE EFFECT OF INTERPRETIVE VERSIONS ON PREACHING

It is time to answer the question of what type of translation is
the best basis for expository preaching. For some the communicative
effectiveness of a free translation or paraphrase is very important. This

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[53]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 235-36; Lewis, *English Bible* 133.

[54]Van Bruggen, *Future* 92.

[55]Bruce, *History* 169, 233.

[56]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 82-83.

[57]Ibid., 253-54.

advantage should not be underestimated.[58] Yet if the ultimate goal of the expositor is to teach the meaning of his passage as the foundation for applications to his congregation's practical experience, he is seriously hindered if he uses a version with excessive interpretive elements. It is a cop-out to use a free translation or paraphrase under the pretext that all translations are interpretive. The fact must be faced that some versions are more interpretive than others, and a choice must be made in this light.

Upon encountering an interpretation different from his own, as he is bound to do,[59] the expository preacher must tell his listeners that the meaning is not what their Bibles say it is. This is a procedure quite different from explaining an ambiguous statement. It will assume the character of a reversal of what the translation says. This practice, when repeated too frequently, maximizes confusion and reduces pedagogical effectiveness.

The situation is analogous to teaching a subject in the classroom with a textbook that expresses viewpoints opposite to those held by the teacher. The class time is consumed with refutations of what the textbook teaches. Such an unsound teaching technique greatly diminishes the success of the learning process, especially in the situation where people are led to believe they hold an authoritative book in their hands. They have been taught that this is the "Bible," not a commentary on the Bible.

It is far more advantageous to use and encourage the audience to follow in a more literal translation, one where the translator has transmitted the original in such a way as to give the church an accurate translation on which to do its own exegesis, and not one which subjects the church to limitations in the translator's understanding of what the

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[58]Communicative effectiveness is especially advantageous when using the Scriptures for evangelistic purposes. No one can debate the conclusion that the interest of non-Christians is gained much more quickly through the use of a free translation or paraphrase. This is the advantage developed by Glassman when he criticizes Christians for the high "fog index" of their terminology when dealing with people who are unfamiliar with theological language (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 49-50; cf. H. G. Hendricks, *Say It with Love* [Wheaton: Victor, 1972] 32-33).

[59]E.g. G. D. Fee, "I Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV," *JETS* 23/4 (1980) 307-14. Fee takes issue with the NIV's translation of γυναικὸς ἅπτεσθαι (*gynaikos haptesthai*) by the word "marry" rather than by the more literal "touch a woman."

text means.[60]   It is the job of the expositor, not of the translator, to explain the meaning of the passage under consideration. When a servant of the Lord imposes on the people of God his personal interpretation, he is morally obligated to clarify his role, that it is one of an expositor, not a translator. In any work that is precisely called a translation, interpretation should be kept to a minimum. Otherwise, the role of the expositor is usurped, and the work becomes a commentary on the meaning of the text, not a translation into the closest equivalent of the receptor language.

Byington has reflected this view of translation:

> To say in my own words what I thought the prophet or apostle was driving at would not, to my mind, be real translation; nor yet to analyze into a string of separate words all the implications which the original may have carried in one word; the difference between conciseness and prolixity is one difference between the Bible and something else. So far as a translation does not keep to this standard, it is a commentary rather than a translation: a very legitimate and useful form of commentary, but it leaves the field of translation unfilled.[61]

Commentaries are much needed, but it is a mistake to assume that a translation can function in that role without ceasing to be a translation. Preaching from an interpretive free translation or paraphrase is almost tantamount to preaching from a commentary, not from a translation. It is not the translator's job to mediate between God's Word and modern culture as the commentator or expositor does.[62]

This is why a strong consensus exists that free translations and paraphrases do not furnish English texts that are suitable for Bible study.[63]   This is why the general recommendation to follow a literal

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[60]Van Bruggen, *Future* 106. Dodd calls this approach of avoiding interpretation whenever possible "a comfortable ambiguity" (Dodd, "Introduction" vii). He acknowledges that free translation is impossible without eliminating this ambiguity. See also Fee, "I Corinthians" 307, who calls it "the safe route of ambiguity." Dodd and Fee portray the dynamic-equivalence practitioner as a courageous scholar who does not shy away from hard choices.

[61]S. T. Byington, "Translator's Preface," *The Bible in Living English* (New York: Watchtower, 1972) 5.

[62]Van Bruggen, *Future* 99.

[63]Lewis, *English Bible* 116, 156, 260, 291; Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 80, 150, 242, 338; W. LaSor, "Which Bible Is Best for You?" *Eternity* 25 (Apr. 1974) 29.

translation for study purposes is widespread.[64]

CONCLUSION

While it must be granted that a sermon is not the same as a classroom lecture, it is still similar to it in that edification of sermon-listeners takes place only when learning takes place. To this end, insofar as philosophy of translation is concerned, it is proposed that the best link between exegesis and expository preaching, the best textbook to use in public exposition of the Word, is a literal translation of the Bible, one in which the interpretive element is kept to a minimum.

The final choice of a translation must not be based on translation techniques alone. It must take into account historical origin, textual basis, theological bias, and usage of the English language also. Among these, however, the philosophy followed in the translation process remains a major factor for consideration in the choice of a version on which to base effective Bible exposition.

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[64]Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 230, 338; Lewis, *English Bible* 116, 222; Bruce, *History* 259.

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