

Cannot God Produce
an Inspired and Perfect
English Bible?

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Why study or learn Greek or Hebrew or Aramaic? Is not God capable of providing English readers with a perfect English Bible? I have lost count of the many times I have encountered such questions. Often the questions stem from the inquirer's genuine belief that we English folks do indeed have a perfect God-breathed Bible, usually they would also imply that that Bible is the 1611 *King James Version*.

In light of these many encounters, I looked for a published reply, an objective one which would illuminate facts not myths or traditions. Alas! I tired of searching, finding little direct information concerning the issues, I now address these questions myself.

Usually issues relating to Biblical inspiration concern themselves with whether or not the original manuscript(s) is/are inspired for such-and-such a text. The discussions rarely concern the inspiration or perfection of the translations of the original languages (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic). On occasion one will find information concerning the LXX [the Septuagint, LXX, is the 2nd/1st century B.C., translation into Greek of the Hebrew Old Testament]; such as in the now classic work, *Revelation and the Bible*, on page 143 in a section by Roger Nicole. In which essay he suggests that those New Testament writers who quote

the LXX, did not give any indication that the entire LXX was/is inspired. Nicole is correct in suggesting that just because dozens of passages from the LXX text are quoted does not mean that therefore all of the LXX is perfect and God-breathed. Numerous other theologians also agree with this observation. Nicole also suggests that readers should always test the LXX quote/text by comparing it with the original Hebrew Old Testament—and to, of course—give preference to the Hebrew text when they vary, which is good advice. One example suffices:

Job 41:11 (41:3 in the Hebrew)

Who has given to Me that I should repay *him*? NASB

מִן הַקְּדִימוֹנִי וְאִשְׁלֶם (Leningrad)

as quoted in Romans 11:35

Who has first given to Him that it might be payed back to him again? NASB

Septuagint Job 41:3

Who opposes Me and perseveres?

ΤΙΣ ἀντιστησεται μοι και υποβενει; (Rahlfs)

Now I can see the how and the why of the LXXs text, but it is not a literal rendering of the original Hebrew text; it is the Hebrew text which nearly all English translations follow here, here the LXX is obviously inaccurate, even misleading!

Jesus Christ often quotes the LXX text, as do other NT authors. They will also follow the Hebrew Masoretic text, each quote must be thus examined and compared to its source. Whichever source is found, the passage as quoted in the Greek New Testament, is inspired. It is true that all of the 39 books of the Hebrew canon are God-breathed, they are the original texts. The translation known as the Greek Septuagint (LXX) is not God-breathed, only those quoted passages in the Greek New Testament which accord to its peculiarities are God-breathed.

So far, I am fairly certain that most readers agree. This information concerning the Greek Septuagint should be crystal clear, without objection.

However, let us now consider another translation. Compare these two texts:

De qui suis-je le débiteur? Je le paierai. Sous le ciel tout m'appartient. (Segond) Job 41:3 (2)

Qui est-ce qui m'a prevenu, et je le lui rendrai?
Ce qui est sous tous les cieux est a moi.
(Martin) Job 41:3 (2)

Should we read, “who may warn me” - *prevenu*; or “who is indebted to me” - *debiteur*? Both are influential French versions,

French translations. But both cannot be correct. Which is inspired? Which is God-breathed? Indeed, cannot God give to the French a perfect, God-breathed Bible? If He did, which is it? Now, as you can by now deduce, we could display all sorts of translations, from the German, Swedish, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Russian, and many many more. Which are God-breathed?

So now we return to our original quest, which English Bible is God-breathed? Is it the Geneva, the KJV, Tyndale's NT, the Bishop's Bible, or any of the hundreds of later editions of the English Bible? If it is the KJV, which one? Is it the original 1611, or the 1769 text, or any of a dozen of other iterations? How does anyone know if a translation is inspired or not?

If a reader insists that God must have given us English folks a perfect English text, then God being fair and just, also gave the French a perfect French translation. Or are the English a special people? Is God biased? How can a Frenchman determine which of the dozen or so of the French translations is inspired? Most French translations are based upon the Latin Vulgate, the Hebrew and the Greek; *not* based upon a later English rendition. The French did not use the KJV as an inspired text from which they created their French Bible. Some common sense must prevail here, some historical facts need to be asserted and recognized. When Paul penned Galatians 1:4, it was in Greek, not in the English of the 17th century!

If God inspired an English translation, then He, being just and fair, also inspired all other translations into all other languages! So, we wind up with about 4,000 inspired Bibles, one each in any of the 4,000 languages which possess a written Bible. (There are about 6,000+ known languages on earth, of which 4,000+ have a translated Bible, or a portion of the Bible).

Now, a Mr. Peter Ruckman (leader of the Ruckmanites) speaks English, it is his native language. Had he been born Danish, then Job 41:3 would read thusly to him:

Jeg tier ej om dens lemmer, hvor stærk den er, hvor smulkt den er skabt. (P. Hasse 1964)

If, such was the case (i.e. that this Mr. Peter Ruckman was Danish) then he would declare that the above Danish text is THE inspired Word from God, or perhaps another edition of the Danish Bible. Fortunately, for the Danes, Mr. Ruckman is an American, and he claims that the KJV is THE inspired word from God, just the KJV no other English Bible!

Since we have a little over 4,000 translations of the Bible, which are supposedly inspired, then the folks who believe that God must have provided a perfect English translation for the English, would—to be consistent—agree that we have 4,000 other inspired translations! Yet none perfectly agree with each other, all vary! No two have identical word-for-word translated

texts. Some may indicate a past tense, others may indicate a present tense in the same passage in their own languages. Which one's are perfect? Which are God-breathed? Again all 4,000 vary, none are identical when compared (the differences are not concerning their different languages, but rather their different renderings).

Folks who believe that God must have provided us English speaking folks a perfect God-breathed text must also consider other human beings, other nationalities as well. Faced with this obvious dilemma they must resort to that always reliable tactic. Compare any questionable texts/translations with the original. In each case, in each of the 4,000 translations, that original is Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic (even the Latin Vulgate is based upon these original languages). All peoples can thus access the original, all can resolve translation problems, all can consult the original languages (at least those who have access to computers or libraries!).

We may therefore thank God, that He has abundantly preserved so many ancient copies of His word in the original languages! In fact, we see amongst the Byzantine manuscripts of the Greek Bible, thousands of Greek manuscripts (made before the printing era) displaying an amazing word for word agreement, even though many of the thousands of manuscripts were written in dozens of different locales within the Roman and Byzantine empires, and written or copied over a period of

1,000 years. Different copyists, different places, different times and epochs, but all producing a single coherent hand written inspired, God-breathed Greek and Hebrew Bible. No other known book has such a preserved historical testimony, such a preserved history. This Bible, as seen amongst these thousands of Greek manuscripts, and amongst hundreds of Hebrew manuscripts, is again available to many folks on this planet. So-called inspired translations would dilute the pristine integrity; ***there was and is no need for God to inspire the many thousands of translations.*** Period. The Greek (Koine Greek), Hebrew and Aramaic originals serve as the foundation for all good subsequent translations. These original language texts are necessary and perfectly fitted to serve all the nations of the earth. Translations may and do vary, but the preserved original language texts, by their very existence, provide all peoples with the very Word from God to all, stable, verified, inspired and permanent.

Why read the Greek and or Hebrew or Aramaic Bible? Many reasons exist, some of the more obvious would be:

(1) Reading the Bible in the original languages is akin to seeing a film in color as opposed to a black and white film.

(2) Reading the Bible in the original languages removes all translation biases, it removes the middle-man; it is just you and the Holy Spirit.

(3) Reading the Bible in Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic really clarifies our relationship with the contents, the original languages as originally laid out produce a powerful linguistic impact.

(4) Satanic distortions and distorted translations are exposed when the originals are consulted and understood. All translations in all of the earth's languages can be clarified and purified when compared to the expressed Word of God, hence it is a joy and duty, a duty Satan tries to hinder.

(5) Reading and understanding the Koine Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic Bible, sets one free. One can feed him/her self! No longer dependent upon the Lutherans, or Baptists, or Catholics. Free!

(6) A personal note; meaning is enriched and understanding shines brightly when the original languages are consulted and understood. My heart goes out to those who shun this intimate relationship with the Word from God. God did say, "Study *the Word*" - not to just study the translations of it.

[*Revelation and the Bible*, was edited by Carl F. H. Henry. Published in 1958, by Baker Book House].

For more information on Biblical manuscripts, variant readings, inerrancy, and other related issues, I recommend many of the essays seen on the (my) website - www.Biblical-data.org. Useful information can be seen under the "Textual Criticism" tabs, and under the tab "On English Translations", and in several other locations. May the site prove useful and edifying to you.