

How Much Should Theology Enter Into Translation, If At all?

In the Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament the claim is made that theology has not entered into this translation at all but it has simply told us what is there. This gives us a reason to examine the question, "Should Theology Affect Translation?" The answer to this cannot be given precisely until one defines exactly what is meant by theology. If what is meant is - Should it be possible for a Christian to take the Koran and give a fair and reasonable translation of it, I would think that it ought to be. Similarly it might be possible for a Moslem to give a fair translation of the Bible. There is a sense in which the prejudices and viewpoints of the translators should not affect his translation.

There is, however, another sense in which theology very definitely ought to affect translation. This is in the sense not of theology ..(9½).. but of context. In Genesis 24 there is a group of Hebrew words which can be literally translated in either of two ways. It may be translated " a servant said, Abraham am I" or "he said, the servant of Abraham am I". Taken alone, either translation is perfectly possible. In the context we read that the servant of Abraham has gone to seek a bride for Isaac. He has come into the land of Mesopotamia, there he has met Abraham's relatives and he starts to tell them of his mission. In the light of the context, only one translation is possible. "He said, the servant of Abraham am I". Thus it is quite obvious that the context in a passage often tells with certainty which of two translations is the correct one.

It is also, however, necessary to take ~~into effect~~ the larger context, ^{into consideration} We read that Abraham worshipped God. The Hebrew word is

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