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Study Topic:

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Study Topic: [input field] **Go!**

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Bible Study Starter

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Study Word:

> Example: prophet

Study Topic:

> Example: marriage

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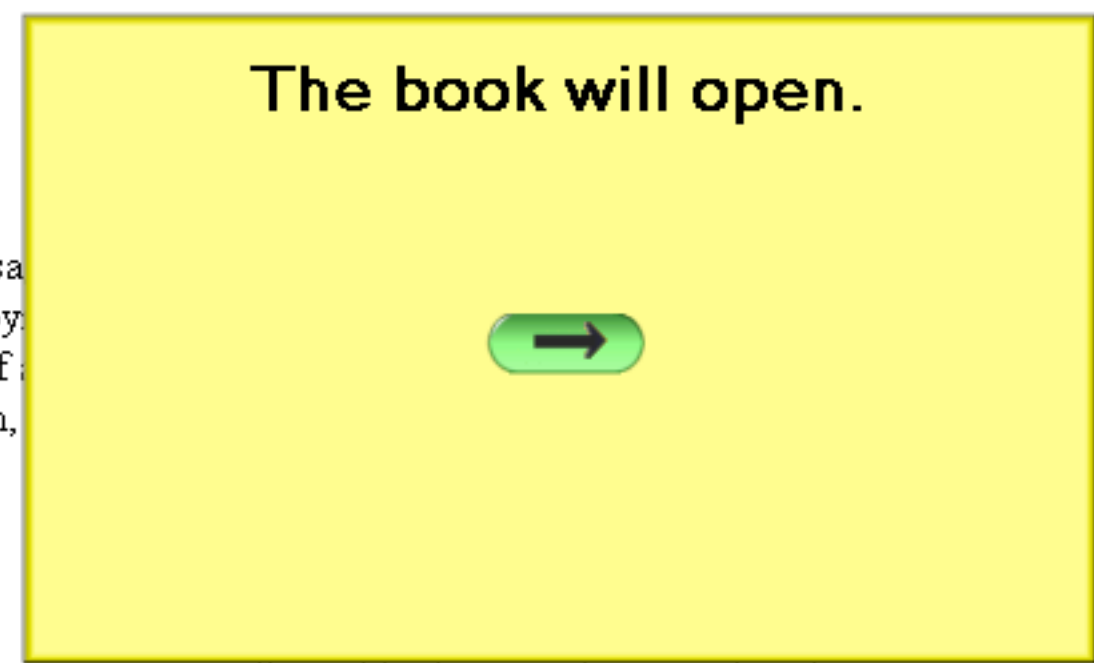
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Paul S. Karleen



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New York Oxford  
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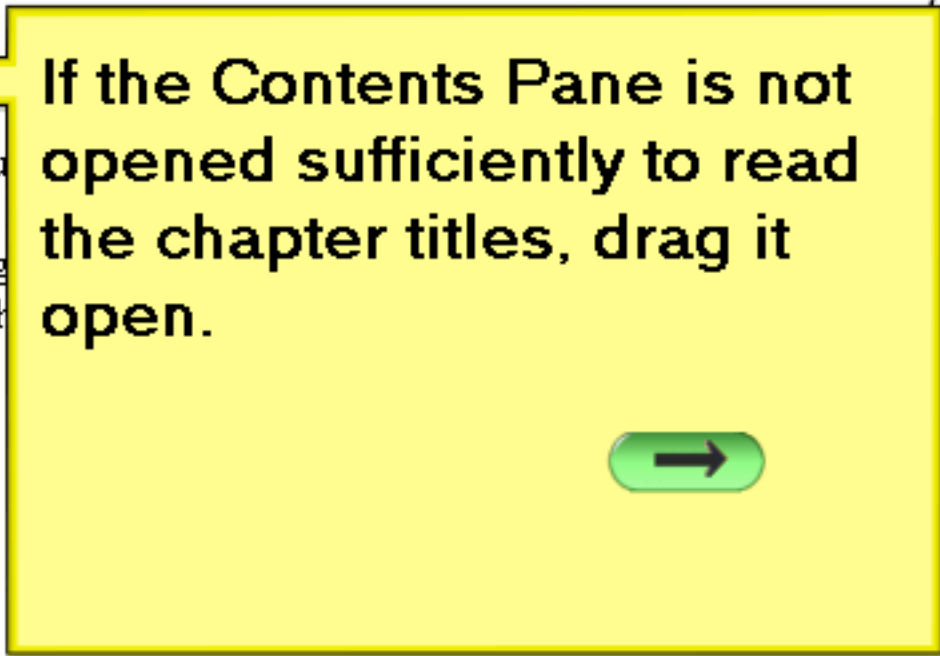
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### Translations and Translating

#### Principles of Translating

Something of the value of accurate translations that can be understood by most people can be seen from the words of Erasmus written over four hundred years ago in 1516:

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Although Bible translation is such a crucial undertaking, until the twentieth century, whether of biblical material or secular. Thus, in the case of the Bible. Two things in particular have led the practice of Bible translating to undergo a cultural anthropology. The second is the rise in the twentieth century of the efforts of many translators.

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The translator must be aware that the meaning of a document (or an utterance) is carried by many linguistic features. In fact, although words seem to be and have long been assumed to be the carriers of meaning, many components in a message carry meaning. The total meaning, that is, content of information to be communicated, does not consist of the meaning (as if there were one) of word 1 + word 2 + word 3 + ... word n. Words themselves carry information only in connection with other words. And some words, such as *former*, as in *the former and the latter*, only serve to show listeners or readers how to process information. Another example of this directive function is the word *that* in *I know that he is alive*. The first *that* in Eph. 1:18 (NIV) or 1:17 (AV) simply serves to indicate that a sentence (here *He is alive*) is coming that is the direct object of a verb (see above in this ch. under "Greek" for a discussion of such *embedding*).

No two languages carry information in the same places and ways. Although it is true that anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, the means of doing so varies from language to language.

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...face to his translation of the Pentateuch (1538):

I had perceived by experience, how that it is impossible to stablish the lay people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and the meaning of the text.<sup>31</sup>

Although Bible translation is such a crucial undertaking, until the twentieth century very little systematic attention was given to the question of how translation of written documents should best be carried out, whether of biblical material or secular. Thus, in the case of the Bible, although actual translation has been practiced for centuries, conscious attempts at formulating guidelines have often been absent.<sup>32</sup> Two things in particular have led the practice of Bible translating to undergo a needed period of methodological self-examination. The first is the development of modern linguistics and the allied field of cultural anthropology. The second is the rise in the twentieth century of groups such as Wycliffe Bible Translators and The United Bible Societies, which as part of its work coordinates the worldwide efforts of many translators.

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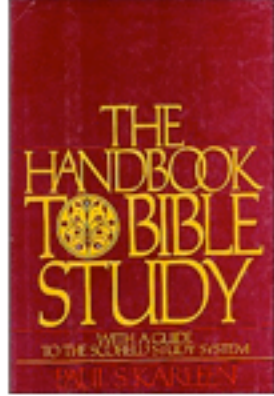
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The general task of the Bible translator can be simply stated: to re- "target") language. This may seem too obvious, but some qualifying sta- even related languages. For centuries descriptions in grammars of Eng- were to be discovered in other languages, regardless of whether or not they were historically related to Greek or Latin. Such an approach masked individual differences among languages (see above in this ch. under "Language as Code"). Since each language has its own structure, its means of communicating information is unique. What one language does with a participle, another may do with a noun. Or, as in the case of Greek, a language may carry a type of information on one occasion with cases and on another with prepositions. This principle of the uniqueness of language structure is hard for most people to grasp.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, recognizing this is absolutely foundational to successful translating, especially in regard to the Bible.

... first ("source") language, in a document of a second ("receptor" or distinct languages. No two languages have the same structure, not Latin, which supposedly possessed standard, ideal structures that

The translator must be aware that the meaning of a document (or an utterance) is carried by many linguistic features. In fact, although words seem to be and have long been assumed to be the carriers of meaning, many components in a message carry meaning. The total meaning, that is, content of information to be communicated, does not consist of the meaning (as if there were one) of word 1 + word 2 + word 3 + . . . word n. Words themselves carry information only in connection with other words. And some words, such as former, as in the former and the latter, only serve to show listeners or readers how to process information. Another example of this directive function is the word that in I know that he is alive. The first that in Eph. 1:18 (NIV) or 1:17 (AV) simply serves to indicate that a sentence (here He is alive) is coming that is the direct object of a verb (see above in this ch. under "Greek" for a discussion of such embedding).

No two languages carry information in the same places and ways. Although it is true that anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, the means of doing so varies from language to

### Translations and Translating


#### *Principles of Translating*

Something of the value of accurate translations that can be understood by most people can be seen from the words of Erasmus written over four hundred years ago in 1516:

I totally disagree with those who are unwilling that the Holy Scriptures, translated into the common tongue, should be read by unlearned. Christ desires His mysteries to be published abroad as widely as possible. I could wish that even all women should read the Gospel and St. Paul's Epistles, and I would that they might be read and known not merely by the Scots and the Irish but even by the Turks and the Saracens. I wish that the farm worker might sing parts of them at the plough, and that the weaver might hum them at the shuttle, and that the traveler might beguile the weariness of the way by reciting them.<sup>30</sup>

In the same century the martyr William Tyndale wrote in the preface to his translation of the Pentateuch (1538):

I had perceived by experience, how that it is impossible to stablish the lay people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue, that they might see the process, order, and the meaning of the text.<sup>31</sup>

Although Bible translation is such a crucial undertaking, until the twentieth century very little systematic attention was given to the question of how translation of written documents should best be carried out, whether of biblical material or secular. Thus, in the case of the Bible, although actual translation  practiced for centuries, conscious attempts at formulating guidelines have often been absent.<sup>32</sup> Two things in particular have led the practice of Bible translating to undergo a needed period of methodological self-examination. The first is the development of modern linguistics and the allied field of cultural anthropology. The second is the rise in the twentieth century of groups such as Wycliffe Bible Translators and The United Bible Societies, which as part of its work coordinates the worldwide efforts of many translators.

The general task of the Bible translator can be simply stated: to reproduce the meaning of the message contained in a document of a first ("source") language, in a document of a second ("receptor" or "target") language. This may seem too obvious, but some qualifying statements must be made. First, the translator is working with two distinct languages. No two languages have the same structure, not even related languages. For centuries descriptions in grammars of English and other languages were modeled on descriptions of Greek or Latin, which supposedly possessed standard, ideal structures that were to be discovered in other languages, regardless of whether or not they were historically related to Greek or Latin. Such an approach masked individual differences among languages (see above in this ch. under "Language as Code"). Since each language has its own structure, its means of communicating information is unique. What one language does with a participle, another may do with a noun. Or, as in the case of Greek, a language may carry a type of information on one occasion with cases and on another with prepositions. This principle of the uniqueness of language structure is hard for most people to grasp.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, recognizing this is absolutely foundational to successful translating, especially in regard to the Bible.

The translator must be aware that the meaning of a document (or an utterance) is carried by many linguistic features. In fact, although words seem to be and have long been assumed to be the carriers of meaning, many components in a message carry meaning. The total meaning, that is, content of information to be communicated, does not consist of word 1 + word 2 + word 3 + . . . word n. Words themselves carry information only in connection with other words. And some words, such as *former*, as in *the former*, tell readers how to process information. Another example of this directive function is the word *that* in *I know that he is alive*. The first *that* in Eph. 1:18 indicates that a sentence (here *He is alive*) is coming that is the direct object of a verb (see above in this ch. under "Greek" for a discussion of such *embedding*).

No two languages carry information in the same places and ways. Although it is true that anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, the way it is said is often very different.

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