Translation Principles of the English Versions Known as the NIV and NJPS Reviewed

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Table of Contents

"Unless you're able to read biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek, you must depend on a translation of the Bible into a more familiar language." (ABS)[1]

Introduction

In 2011 the world's best selling English translation of the Bible – *The New International Version* (NIV) will again be revised. The research in this paper is primarily for submission to the NIV revision committee. In this paper I hope to point out the strengths and weaknesses of the NIV by comparing it with another similar translation - the *Jewish Publications Society Tanakh – second edition,* also know as the *New Jewish Publication Society Translation* (NJPS). Other versions, particularly the *King James Version* (KJV) will also be discussed. The purpose will be to take into consideration the goals and principles of the translation committees and to see if they were met. I will begin by comparing the choice of an underlying original language text or texts, then proceed to discussing translation methods and principles and finally to an actual comparison of the translations themselves.

Translational Elements

Choice of a Source Text(s)

Most, if not all, of the popular modern English translations of the Bible are based on critical editions of the Bible. For the Old Testament, Biblia Hebraica Stutgartensia (BHS)[2] has been widely used. BHS is a reproduction of the Leningrad codex, with a critical apparatus included at the bottom of the page and also the Masoretic notes.[3] BHS is considered a "diplomatic" text.

The major English translations with the exception of those produced by the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) are produced by Christian scholars and therefore

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[1] American Bible Societies "How to Choose a Bible Translation"
http://www.americanbible.org/brcpages/bibletranslation

[2] also called BHK or BHL in various editions

[3] For the Masora Magna, one must consult an accompanying volume.

include the New Testament.[4]   For the NT, The United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (UBS) and/or the Nestle-Aland (NA) Greek New Testament are typically chosen for the source text(s). Both of these NT critical editions are "eclectic" versions.

Diplomatic v. Eclectic Source Texts

Critical editions of the Bible generally fall into one of two categories, either Diplomatic or Eclectic.

A critical Diplomatic Text is one that reproduces a single extant manuscript with footnotes showing variations found in other ancient texts and sources. BHS and also BHQ (Biblical Hebraica Quinta)[5] are diplomatic versions that reproduce the Leningrad text. This is the oldest complete manuscript of the entire Hebrew Bible dating to 1008 AD. The *Hebrew University Bible* (HUB) is also a diplomatic edition and is based on the Aleppo codex. The Aleppo codex (also called the Aleppo crown) is considered to be the most accurate surviving manuscript of the Hebrew bible in the Masoretic tradition (M). However the Aleppo codex is not complete due to damage from fire. Therefore the HUB editors will face a problem maintaining a diplomatic text when they reach those points of the scriptures for which the Aleppo does not exist and cannot be recreated. To date the work has been progressing very slowly and has started with the portions of the Aleppo codex that have survived. So far Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel have been published.

An Eclectic text, on the other hand, does not represent any one existing manuscript, but rather is an attempt to reconstruct the original text of the Bible. This is accomplished by comparing existing Bible manuscripts and other ancient sources and choosing between variants for the purpose of getting at the "original" text, or at least to a very early version thereof.   Regarding the NT Randall Price states "The majority of scholars, however, believe it is certainly possible to produce a critical edition of the New Testament that very closely resembles the original" (Price p225). The same can be said

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[4] Versions/editions produced for Catholics also include the Apocrypha. It is outside the nature of this paper to discuss versions created by individual scholars, some of which are based upon individual manuscripts.

[5] BHQ is a forth-coming edition of the BHS series, not to be confused with the Quinta edition of BHS, which is merely the latest printing of the previous BHS with corrections and an English key. The new BHQ is appearing in multiple volumes as the apparatus makes the work too large for one volume.

for the Old Testament (OT). The concept of 'original text' will be discussed further under URTEXT below.

The publication of the discoveries from the Judean desert (the so called Dead Sea Scrolls) seems to support the need for an eclectic text, since many of the texts there seem to reflect a proto-Masoretic text, that is to say they stand earlier in the linear history of M and thus are closer to the original. Additionally, the Septuagint (LXX)[6] contains significant early variants and in several places allows scholars to repair corruptions in the Masoretic text. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Latin Vulgate also provide some testimony when trying to reconstruct the original text of the bible. In addition other early witnesses such as the Syriac translation, the Targums, early Jewish and Christian writings and other sources are used to weigh variant readings.

In the past, individuals have produced their own eclectic texts of the Hebrew Bible. Currently a group of scholars is working to produce a new eclectic critical edition of the bible called the *Oxford Hebrew Bible*. The OHB, when completed, will be an eclectic critical edition of the Old Testament with apparatus.
Ronald Hendel makes the following observation concerning the OHB:

> "There are obstacles and advantages to an eclectic critical edition... one signal advantage (which some will doubtless consider a disadvantage) is that such a critical edition requires its editors to exercise their full critical judgment concerning the variant readings and textual problems of the Hebrew Bible. This contrasts with the existing diplomatic editions where the burden of making text-critical decisions often falls to the reader, who is often innocent of the discipline of textual criticism. Unfortunately this creates a widespread situation in which important text-critical judgments tend to be exercised by those least qualified to make them. It is arguable that textual critics ought to take up the burden of such decisions and not

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[6] Also designated 'G' for 'Greek', LXX is the Roman number equaling 70, and refers to the original 70 (72) scribes who translated the Torah into Greek. The term Septuagint now refers not only to that translation of the Torah but also to the entire translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek. The LXX was begun in the mid 3rd cent. BC.

leave them to others. Such, at least, is the premise of the OHB." (Hendel p325)

The OHB has much to commend it, however English editions based upon it will still have to decide which text to base their translation on, for in several passages the OHB will contain variant texts in parallel columns. This technique will be used when passages are significantly different in the various ancient sources, especially the LXX (Septuagint).   Hendel states, "In some biblical books multiple editions exist only in certain sections, so parallel columns will appear and disappear in the critical edition as needed." (Hendel p327) While this will be useful for study, I am curious to see how future English Translations based on the OHB will make use of and make note of such a system. It will not suffice to state in the preface that a given version is 'based on the OHB', for the question will arise 'which version within the OHB?'.

A diplomatic edition has the advantage of being based on a 'real' ancient manuscript of the bible, while an eclectic edition produces a text that does not exist and perhaps never did, even though an eclectic edition can, in theory, produce a text that is closer to the autograph. In support of eclectic editions Randall Price writes "This book is written in the confident conviction that, in the critical editions or our present Hebrew and Greek texts, we have substantially all of the words given by God, and that the work of textual critics today is bringing us ever closer to the Original Bible." (Price p14). The statement here 'the words given by God' is an important concept when considering the motivation for seeking the 'original bible'.

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy[7] is a recent attempt by conservative Protestant Christian scholars to put into words their view of the nature of the scriptures and Divine inspiration.[8] The importance to Christian scholars in seeking the original text of the Bible is clearly shown in Article X: "We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy." With this outlook, it

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http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html?mainframe=http://www.reformed.org/documents/icbi.html

[8] One Biblical definition of inspiration comes from 1st Chronicles 28:19 "'All this', said David, 'I have in writing from the hand of the LORD upon me...'"

becomes clear why Christian scholars prefer eclectic editions over diplomatic editions, especially with regard to the N.T. In the O.T. Christian Scholars will often use the diplomatic BHS but will produce from it an eclectic translation.

On the other hand Jewish sages viewed the Masoretic text, particularly of the Torah to be the exact words, even in spelling, given by God at Mt. Sinai (Price p35). The Masoretes were unwilling to change the consonantal text, even when they knew it contained an error or spelling mistake[9]. This can be shown in part by the Ktiv (written) and Kri (read) notes in the text. (The Masoretes would often indicate that a word was to be read differently than it was actually spelt). A similar view of 'inspired' editions is held by some today in Christian circles who believe that the Masoretic text is the God-given version. Some groups even claim that a particular English translation was inspired.[10]

For the OT a diplomatic edition makes sense since the Masoretic textual tradition is the only Hebrew one to come down through the centuries[11] and which has served as The Bible for the Jewish community for more than a thousand years. However for the NT, several textual traditions exist and to chose one for a diplomatic text would be extremely sectarian. Three (or four) major families of texts are noted – Byzantine, Western and Alexandrian (and Caesarean). Randall Price notes that "...while most scholars have agreed that some text families are superior to others (the Alexandrian having earlier and better manuscripts), they have not agreed that one should be elevated to the exclusion of all others." (Price p234). It is possible to choose one of the three early complete (or nearly so) codices of the NT, Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Sinaiticus, or

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[9] Thus the Masoretes avoided making an eclectic edition, though it cannot be proved that originally they did not do this. The concept of the spelling being inspired runs into problems when we consider that the texts were originally written in paleo-Hebrew and likely the matres lectioni - consonants used as vowels to aid in pronunciation - were added later. Additionally, to claim the spelling was inspired would also require one to claim that not only the prophet, but also the scribe was inspired. For example Baruch claims that Jeremiah dictated the words and that he wrote them down (Jer. 36:18). It is not likely that Jeremiah was spelling the words for Baruch!

[10] Especially the KJV – see the book by White.

[11] The Samaritan Pentateuch is also a significant textual tradition, but only contains the first five books and has been shown to have numerous scribal alterations.

Codex Vaticanus, as a basis for a diplomatic edition. The later two probably go back to the same textual tradition, yet there are thousands of variants between them (Price pp79-80). However these two manuscripts lack the longer ending of the Gospel according to Mark and the story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8. Green, in the preface to his interlinear version, points out that one has deliberately left space for the longer section of Mark and the other started double spacing. This indicates that the writers of both manuscripts knew the ending of Mark's Gospel account. Their reason for leaving it out may be that they considered it corrupt[12], unauthentic, or that the manuscript from which their textual tradition derives was damaged at the end of Mark.[13] Either way, to follow one of these manuscripts is to leave out two passages that have been part of the Bible of the Christian community through the ages. The NIV places the following note in the text before Mark 16:9-20: [The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20]. While this sort of note brings the problem to the reader's attention, it does little to inform the reader as to which texts and witnesses lack this passage. At the same time the NIV makes the value judgment that these texts are more reliable than others – a thing that is not without dispute (Green and others).

Urtext

The term Urtext refers to the existence at some point of one and only one autograph (the text originally penned, and in our discussion, penned under the inspiration of God). Emanuel Tov has pointed out that the existence of an Urtext is the most likely situation and to which the textual evidence seems to point, however it is possible that several early versions (parallel editions) were produced by the same author (Tov pp171ff). An example of this is Jeremiah 36:27ff where the original scroll of Jeremiah's words was burnt and the LORD had Jeremiah produce another identical one. One must ask if the spelling was exactly the same in both versions. Additionally one must consider

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[12] It may be unoriginal to Mark but nevertheless may have been an authentic, historical account. Or it may have early on been damaged and reconstructed by a scribe looking at the damaged original. We see a similar thing happening in Erasmus' reconstruction into Greek of the final verses of Revelation from the Latin Vulgate (see White p107). (The text he was working with was missing these verses).

[13] Other manuscripts mark this passage in a variety of ways indicating scribal doubt about it.

that this was not the prophet's last prophecy, and therefore the new version would eventually be longer than the original – yet both were inspired. Though the discussion about this passage in Jeremiah is much larger and more complicated than can be dealt with here[14], it does provide one type of example of how more than one original autograph may have existed.

Another example of possible multiple autographs is the NT book Revelation. In it John is commanded by Jesus to write to the seven churches in Asia. Did John make seven copies – one for each church, or just one copy that circulated? Price supports the idea that John made seven autographs (Price p44). Even if all seven copies were exactly the same, they would all have to be counted as autographs, and as copying proceeded through the ages, each autograph would provide a different linear textual heritage. By comparing a text from one linear heritage to a text from another, it would be possible to create an eclectic edition that contains a text that never existed in any of the seven lineages! Though hopefully careful scholarship would avoid this pitfall, this type of situation does point out a major fault with eclectic texts.

The Dead Sea Scrolls themselves do show varied textual traditions, which may reflect different linear heritages from different autographs, yet it is more likely that they all originated from the same texts (Tov p164ff). These early manuscripts are far enough departed from the autographs to allow for variations to arise without the need to claim that a single Urtext never existed (Price pp107ff).

Price also makes a few notable points about the advantage of having so many variant texts (Price p252ff): If we did ever find an autograph, it would only be possible to prove it is the autograph by comparing all the existing variant copies, which would testify to its authenticity. Yet even if we had the autographs, we would still have varying translations based upon them. Indeed this is the huge advantage of having the LXX, the Vulgate and others – they provide testimony to the proper way to understand a given Hebrew passage that might otherwise be unclear.

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[14] Discussions concerning Jeremiah must of necessity take into account the longer and shorter versions found in M compared to LXX – see Price p40ff and Tov.

Diplomatic or Eclectic English Translation

The term "eclectic" can also be applied to most all the major English translations. Some of the translations, such as the NIV are more eclectic (in the New Testament section especially) while the *New King James Version* (NKJV) may be considered less eclectic, yet both versions depart from the BHS upon which they are based for the OT and often choose the variant readings. For the New Testament, the publisher of the NIV - Biblica - states plainly that it is an eclectic text.[15] At the same time the latest edition of the diplomatic BHS is used to underlie the OT.[16] So here we see in one of the most widely received and purchased English translations, two different approaches being used - one for the OT and a more eclectic technique for the NT.

Even the very literal *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) is an eclectic version. The Lockman Foundation states plainly, "The latest edition of Rudolf Kittel's BIBLIA HEBRAICA has been employed together with the most recent light from lexicography, cognate languages, and the Dead Sea Scrolls."[17]

The importance of a translation being eclectic in nature is clearly shown by Hendel's statement earlier. For in no way would it be wise to force a reader who is untrained in the use of critical methods to choose between alternative readings in the footnotes of his English bible, if such a bible was merely a translation of a diplomatic text such as BHS. Rather it becomes plainly evident that the translator (or translation committee) must be expert in textual criticism and with such tools to make the best choice for the text of the translation and only to footnote significant variants for which there is no clear answer as to which is the original. If the case is such that the translator is not trained in the critical method then such a translator would be well advised to avoid the BHS/Q and especially the HUB and instead work from the eclectic OHB text[18].

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[15] Biblica - http://www.biblica.com/niv/mct/eclectic-new-testament.php

[16] Biblica - http://www.biblica.com/niv/mct/bible-hebrew-aramaic.php

[17] The Lockman Foundation "New American Standard Bible Translation Principles" -
http://www.lockman.org/nasb/nasbprin.php

[18] While sufficient scholarship exists in the English speaking world, the case is not so for those working to translate the Bible into any of the thousands of languages for which no scholarship exists. Often lone missionaries or small groups are busy translating the Bible into obscure languages, and while such

It must be pointed out that translators are by nature NOT sufficiently skilled in textual criticism to work alone, for that is not their profession. Rather the job of the translator is in rendering a natural sounding, syntactically and grammatically correct foreign language translation out of the original language. For this reason, most modern translations are produced by committees, thus pooling the skills of grammarians, editors, translators, textual critics and biblical scholars of various specializations. The NIV is no exception.

An example of a diplomatic translation is that produced by the Jewish Publications Society (JPS) – *The New JPS Translation* (NJPS). This version contains only the Old Testament (the 'Hebrew Bible') and is a translation to English based only on the Leningrad Codex (L) and is therefore a diplomatic translation. Rather than correcting errors in L, the NJPS simply footnotes the more likely original reading[19].

Translation Methods

"Translation is the process of communicating a message into a language that is different from the one in which the message was originally written." (ABS)[20]   This statement is loaded with meaning. For translation is more than just providing dictionary definitions of foreign words into English and placing them into the framework of English syntax, but rather that of "communicating a message".   It is necessary therefore to provide more than a simple word for word "translation" but rather to implement language as needed to be sure that the basic meaning of the text is conveyed[21]. The very extreme

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individuals may have some training in Hebrew and Greek, they do not have the expertise to make critical judgments and thus will benefit from eclectic texts.

[19] The NJPS preface notes that on rare occasion changes in person number are incorporated in the text and the traditional Hebrew is footnoted. Elsewhere the NJPS occasionally ignores the traditional accentuation (and thus sentence structure). Thus in these small details it departs from a strictly diplomatic translation.

[20] Ibid., http://www.americanbible.org/brcpages/translating

[21] Explanation of unknown customs is also possible within the version and may not be without precedent within the bible itself - (Ruth 4:7 and elsewhere). Elsewhere in the N.T. we have the gospel writer explaining words of Jesus that are recorded by transliteration in their original tongue "Talitha Kumi"(thus indicating either that Jesus was not speaking in his usual language or that the writer wished to preserve Jesus exact words for that phrase only).

example of this method results in a translation that resembles a commentary such as the version called *The Amplified Bible*. The other end of this spectrum results in translations such as the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) or the more extreme literal versions such as those by Jay P. Green,[22] which do not read well due to the unnatural use of the English language. At the center of this spectrum is the Dynamic Equivalent approach employed by the translators of the *New International Version* (NIV) and the *Jewish Publications Society Tanakh – second edition* (NJPS). Below is a brief outline of which translation techniques were used in the creation of various English versions.

Spectrum of translations

Literal (Formal Equivalence): KJV, NKJV, NASB, RSV, ASV, ESV[23]

Dynamic (Functional Equivalence): NIV, TNIV, CEV, NJPS, NRSV [24]

Expanded: *Amplified, Philips*

Interpretive Paraphrase: *Living Bible* and *The Message*

Interpretive paraphrase versions, such as the Living Bible, are prone to strong theological biases.[25] *The Living Bible* was created from the ASV by Kenneth N. Taylor and does not represent a translation. However it is mentioned because by 1997 over 40 million copies have sold (Marlowe paragraph 10) and it therefore must be considered a major modern English version. *The Message* goes even farther and cannot properly be considered a "translation" but rather a light-hearted adaptation, even though its author, Eugene H. Peterson, was trained in Hebrew. *The Message* is also mentioned due to its sales of over

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[22] e.g. *The Interlinear Hebrew-Greek-English Bible, One-Volume Edition* By: Jay P. Green and his *KJV II* and *KJV3*.

Hendrickson Publishers, 2005. Green has also produced updated versions of the KJV. Green himself is a fan of the Received Text / Majority Text.

[23] King James Version, New King James Version, New American Standard Bible, American Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, English Standard Version

[24] New International Version, Today's New International Version, Contemporary English Version, (New) Jewish Publications Society (Tanakh), New Revised Standard Version (Not exactly a DE translation, yet not worthy of being called 'literal' - For a very fair review of this poor translation see the article by Arthur Farstad)

[25] Michael Marlowe gives examples - http://www.bible-researcher.com/lbp.html

6 million copies.[26] It was number 8 in the top ten most purchased bibles in U.S.A. Christian retail stores in 2009.[27] Toping that list is the NIV[28] followed by the KJV and NKJV.

Dynamic Equivalence

Both the NIV and the NJPS are modern English translations produced by scholarly committees. Both are also translations that employ the Dynamic Equivalence technique (thought-for-thought), rather than the Formal Equivalence technique (word-for-word). Dynamic Equivalence (DE) is also referred to as 'Functional Equivalence'. This technique allows for a very natural sounding English rendering, while at the same time allowing translators to convey the intended message of the text. DE will take a foreign language idiom and instead of translating it, will substitute an English idiom or simply provide a translation that conveys the message plainly.

An example is Luke 9:44 where the KJV has the very literal "Let these sayings sink down into your ears" and the NIV has "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you". While the NIV conveys the meaning of the original words, it looses the flavor of the original text. In this passage in particular, it is unlikely that a modern reader would have trouble understanding the very literal KJV and therefore the loss of this expression in the NIV is unfortunate. However both the NIV and the NJPS retain the rather odd "Had you not plowed with my heifer, you would not have guessed my riddle!" (NJPS – Judges 14:18b). The phrase of course refers to the pressure put on Samson's wife to extract the riddle's solution from him (Judges 14:15ff). Here both versions, by providing

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[26] Michelle Bearden - http://www.bible-researcher.com/themessage.html

[27] http://blindbeggar.org/?p=891

[28] According to an email from Steve Johnson, Vice President, Communication & Integrated Media, at Biblica :" In total, more than 400 million copies of the NIV have been distributed since it was first published in 1978." and per year: "Sold or given away by Biblica worldwide – approximately 15 million (including full Bibles, New Testaments, and portions). Sold by other NIV publishers – approximately 10 million including the US, UK, Philippines, India, Africa and other English speaking parts of the world"

By comparison, Alx Block, Online Sales & Marketing Manager at the Jewish Publication Society, stated in an email to me concerning the NJPS "We have sold over 750,000 between 1998 and 2010. My best guess would be 1.5 million for all time sales."

literal translations, allow the reader to get a 'taste' of Hebrew expressions. While the reader may be completely unfamiliar with such an expression, he is able to grasp its meaning from the story's context.

An example of an often misunderstood expression is the 'evil eye' – found in the OT at Deut. 15:9 and elsewhere, but also used in various settings by Jesus including Matthew 6:23. The term does not refer to a 'dirty look' as many have misunderstood it to mean, but rather a greedy attitude. This of course makes sense in the context of Jesus' words about money. Rather than change the expression, the NIV would do well simply to footnote an explanation and to provide the OT cross-references, which show its contextual use.

NIV / NJPS Compared

NIV and NJPS translations

It is not entirely accurate to say that the NIV is a 'Christian' Bible and the NJPS is a 'Jewish' Bible. For it is obvious that both Jews and non-Jews can benefit from reading either of these fine translations. As the Preface to the NJPS states, even the previous JPS version *The Holy Scriptures* (1917) made heavy use of the King James Version, thus indicating how closely tied Jews and Christians have been with regard to translations. Even Jerome's Vulgate was created in close consultation with Jewish scholars. Rather it is more accurate to say that the NIV includes the 27 books of the New Testament in the sacred canon of scripture in addition to the 39 books of the Hebrew Bible to which the NJPS limits itself.[29]

However, certain translational biases can be found in both, which reflect Christian (NIV) or non-Christian (NJPS) doctrines. The way these versions translate the second verse of the Bible make this obvious – In Genesis 1:2 the Hebrew words רוח אלהים (Ruach Elohim) are translated as 'Spirit of God' by the NIV and as 'wind from God' by the NJPS. The NIV clearly making room for the doctrine of the Trinity, while the NJPS is plainly choosing to avoid this doctrine. However the NJPS does include the footnote

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[29] Both Protestant Christians and Jews agree upon the 39 books of the Old Testament (also called the 'Hebrew Bible'). The Jews often count 24 books by combining some of the books together – the twelve minor prophets, Ezra-Nehemiah, Kings and Samuel, however the content is the same.

"Others 'the spirit of.'" This footnote does not capitalize the word spirit so as to avoid the doctrine of the third person of the Trinity, while at the same time pointing out the normal rendering of the Hebrew words into English[30]. A comparison will be made further below of several other passages and how the translators of these two versions rendered them into English.

Brief history of NIV/NJPS

The NIV had its beginnings in 1965 and the whole Bible was completed in 1978[31]. The current edition was completed in 1983 reflecting suggested revisions. The NJPS was begun in 1955 and completed in 1985. The second edition of the NJPS was completed in 1999, likewise reflecting suggested improvements and revisions.

Importance of Similarity to Previous Versions

The importance of appearing as similar as possible to previous versions cannot be understated. This is necessary for passage familiarity and for memorization. Of the fifteen instructions given to the KJV translators, the first five instructions are devoted to making the KJV similar to existing bibles. #1 is "The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the original will permit." Likewise the NIV and NJPS, although entirely new translations took into consideration previous versions, particularly in the KJV tradition, when making translational choices. As the NIV preface states: "The Committee also sought to preserve some measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English." The NJPS, as stated above, ties the original JPS translation of 1917 to its extensive use of the KJV.

However, overall the NIV departs significantly from the KJV and the underlying Received Text (Textus Receptus – TR), often by deleting phrases or verses and often without footnoting the omission. For example at Romans 15:29 the NIV omits the words 'of the gospel'. Though the phrase is missing in several ancient texts, especially of the

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[30] Compare for example Numbers 24:2 where the NJPS translates (Ruach Elohim) as 'spirit of God'.

[31] According to the preface. Biblica gives variant information on their website, stating that "The process started in 1968 and finished in 1978. This does not include more than 10 years of planning before 1968." - http://www.biblica.com/niv/index.php

Alexandrian type, it could have dropped out due to homoeoteleuton – a technical term meaning 'similar endings'. In other words a scribe missed the short phrase by his eyes jumping over it to the next phrase due to similar word endings (Brotzman p112). The decision not to footnote such a questionable omission seems unwise.

A similar example is found at 1st Corinthians 10:28, where the NIV deletes the traditional ending of the verse, however here the NIV provides the omitted text in a footnote, noting that "some manuscripts" contain it.

If the NIV truly wanted to 'preserve some measure of continuity...' with previous translations, it would seem that a better route would be to include the questionable phrases and to footnote the textual evidence against them. Instead, by omitting some of the traditional text of the Bible and to occasionally do so without a footnote, is what has led many to question the validity of the NIV, especially those in the so called KJV Only camp (see White).

However at Amos 4:4 the NIV does stay consistent to the KJV by translating the Hebrew as 'tithes every three years'[32] instead of the literal 'every three days' (NASB). Here the NIV provides the footnote "Or *tithes on the third day*". Unfortunately the term 'Or' in the footnote does not indicate to the reader that the footnote reflects the actual Hebrew. The NJPS simply translates the phrase more precisely, choosing coincidentally[33] the exact text of the NIV footnote.

The NJPS departs from the KJV and other previous English translations in two areas in particular. The first is that translational choices were made so as to avoid support for Christian doctrines and the second is a greater measure of gender inclusiveness. Both of these items will be discussed further below.

Motivations for these translations

Both translations state that a need existed for a new translation at the time the projects were undertaken. Among the reasons stated by both are recent advancements in

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[32] White claims that the KJV and NIV are here harmonizing this passage with Jewish law. (White p290)

[33] Numerous coincidences such as this, especially in passages such as Micah 5 (see discussion below) that don't stick to the Hebrew, makes me wonder if there was any collaboration between the two translation committees which were working simultaneously to produce these Dynamic Equivalent translations.

textual criticism / textual discoveries and the need to offer a version that is truly in contemporary English. Both translations point to the elimination of the archaic pronouns such as 'thee' and 'thou'. Indeed at the time these translations were undertaken, the major English versions appeared archaic. Even the NASB, completed in 1963, retained archaic language and was too much of a 'word for word' translation to achieve good English. The NASB also retained the traditional layout of separating each verse from the next rather than using paragraph form.

Layout

The layout of both the NIV and NJPS is more pleasant to the reader and more conducive to understanding the text within its context than previous English versions. By laying out the text in paragraph form while retaining the verse numbers within the paragraph, reading becomes more natural while easy chapter and verse reference is maintained. Both versions also ignore the chapter divisions and combine verses in their natural context into paragraphs. Thus both the NIV and NJPS join Genesis 7:24 to 8:1 as a paragraph. Likewise the NIV and NJPS join 1st Kings 6:37-38 to 7:1. However in both of these cases the NIV does a less precise job by leaving spaces after the verses to allow for the chapter numbers. The NJPS makes the chapter numbers less intrusive to the flow of the text.

The NJPS indicates large textual breaks (Patuach) by providing a blank line. However line breaks are also provided at the end of a natural section even when not indicated by the Masoretes, such as at 1st Kings 5:26 (5:12 in the NIV). The NIV adopted a similar format by inserting helpful section headings, though not strictly following the Masoretic breaks. Indeed in the present example the Masoretic open break is not even indicated at all in the NIV, not even by a paragraph break. Our example also demonstrates an extreme variance in chapter and verse numbering. Typically there is only a difference of one verse such as in the Psalms where the heading is verse one in the NJPS (and BHS) but is not numbered in most English versions including the NIV. The NJPS follows the Hebrew chapter and verse divisions as found in the BHS and is thus simpler to use when looking up passages in the original language. The NIV has the advantage of following the chapter and verse division that is most well know to most of the English-speaking world. This is in accord with that found in the LXX. In these

modern times, when so much emphasis is placed on the Masoretic text by the Western Christian community, it is surprising that a switch to following the Hebrew Bible chapter and verse divisions isn't made or at least noted in parenthesis (I use this technique below in the comparison of selected passages).

Order of the books

The NIV and the NJPS also differ in the order in which the books of the OT are arranged. The order of the NIV goes back to the LXX while the Jews followed the order of the Hebrew Bible – The Torah, the Prophets and the Writings. Price claims that the continued difference is a result of Christians claiming Jesus is the fulfillment of OT prophecy and the expectation that the closing of the OT points to in the final prophecies of Malachi which land at the end of the Christian Bibles. The Jews in arguing against Jesus claimed that the end of the OT with the book of Chronicles points instead to the restoration of the nation of Israel. (Price p206).

Jesus himself may have been referring to a canonical order of books that started with Genesis and ended with Chronicles. In Matthew 23:35 we read, "And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, form the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah[34], whom you murdered between the temple and the altar". This seems to be a reference to 2nd Chronicles 24:21: "But they plotted against him (Zechariah), and by order of the king they stoned him to death in the courtyard of the LORD's temple." However in this passage Zechariah is called the son of Jehoiada.[35]

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[34] Luke has the same account but doesn't refer to Berekiah.

[35] The reference by Jesus may be to Zechariah the prophet who is the son of Berekiah (Zech 1:1) The Targum Yonatan on Lamentations 2:20 says Zechariah, son of Iddo, was killed in the Temple. However supporting my understanding is Jerome who indicates that the Gospel of Matthew in Greek is corrupt here and that the original Hebrew version – which he claims to have seen – read 'son of Jehoiada'. "In the Gospel the Nazareans use, we find 'son of Johoiada' instead of 'son of Barachia.'" - http://www.tektonics.org/lp/matt2335.html.   Also "The phrase son of Berechiah is absent from the important early manuscript Codex Sinaiticus, and a few other manuscripts" - http://sabdiscussionboard.yuku.com/topic/1056

The NJPS has the distinct advantage of following the basic order of the BHS, which is helpful for aspiring Hebrew students in finding passages in that critical text[36]. The NIV has the advantage of following the order that so many children, including myself, memorized in Sunday school, thus facilitating quick passage searches.

View of 'Original Text' of the Bible

The NIV seeks to represent as close as possible the 'Original text' of the Bible. The NJPS seeks to represent the Masoretic Text (M) and particularly that of the Leningrad codex because M has been the text of the religion of mainstream Judaism for many hundreds of years. While in Christianity (especially in Europe) the LXX and then the Vulgate and finally the Masoretic text were the texts considered authoritative. Recently the tendency is to consider M as authoritative, when corrected.

Introductions contained in the English Bibles

Most modern translations include some sort of Introduction which generally includes some or all of the following: Source texts, method of translation (word for word or thought for thought, etc...), composition of the translation committee, purpose of the translation, heritage of the translation and more. The NIV and NJPS are no exception.

The NJPS includes both the preface to the 1985 English edition and the 1999 preface in the second edition, which is concerned mostly with the Hebrew Text. The NIV preface is informative, though only half as long as the 1985 NJPS preface, even though it also discusses the NT. The NJPS also includes a nice history of Bible translation / transmission.

Non-Printing of Introductions

However, these insightful (or in some cases not so insightful) introductions do not always appear in every printing of a given version. For example the *English-Hebrew Bible* [37], a parallel NKJV / Hebrew Bible[38], does not contain the introductions to either

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[36] One should question why the BHS still includes the Latin names of the books – if one can not at least read the Hebrew names of the books, he has no business picking up a BHS!

[37] Published by The Bible Society in Israel, in conjunction with the Israel Association for the Dissemination of Biblical Writings, 1996

the NKJV or the Hebrew translations. In fact no introduction whatsoever is supplied nor are the footnotes (with the exception of the Kri). The Hebrew translations of the Aramaic sections were also omitted even though they are a part of the same text when published elsewhere in Hebrew only printings of this Bible.

In this case the purpose may be space conservation as this is a single volume printing of both the OT and the NT in two languages. The type is already as small as one would desire for daily reading and the weight and dimensions of the volume are already cumbersome, though tolerable for transport by hand or handbag. In essence the publisher has encountered the same difficulty as the publisher of BHS, the limiting of oneself to a reasonably sized single volume edition. In the case before us, the publisher may have been wise to include a website address on the copyright page so that users could find the introduction and footnotes of the versions online. Additionally in this example the publisher does not present any information about the source text behind the English translation or that of the Hebrew text.[39]

By comparison the NJPS parallel Hebrew/English version lacks the NT and therefore space constraints are not as large of a concern. This NJPS publication contains all the footnotes, the introduction/preface, and at the rear, tables of scriptural readings and glossaries of terms.

Name of God

Foreign language translations are always faced with the difficulty of deciding how to render the Tetragrammaton (the four letter name of God – YHWH). Both the NIV and the NJPS choose 'LORD' – implementing small capital letters to distinguish the name from the title Adonai which is translated as 'Lord'. Translating YHWH as LORD is based

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[38] The NIV is not currently available in a parallel Hebrew/English version; therefore this popular NKJV edition is discussed instead. An NIV parallel version would encounter similar difficulties.

[39] The United Bible Societies website states: "The Hebrew OT is based on the Leningrad Masoretic Text from the 3rd edition of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. The text of the Hebrew NT is Modern Hebrew with standard Hebrew characters and punctuation. The English text is the 1982 edition of the New King James Version." (http://www.ubs-translations.org/cat/biblical_texts/hebrew_scriptures_and_reference/hebrew_scriptures_diglots/#c240)

largely on the LXX, which used the Greek word for 'Lord' when encountering the divine name.

The NIV committee made the decision to translate יהוה צבאות in 1ˢᵗ Samuel 1:3 and elsewhere as 'LORD Almighty' instead of the traditional 'LORD of Hosts' which the NJPS maintains. Likewise 'God of Hosts' is changed to 'God Almighty'. The preface of the NIV explains this saying that "...for most modern readers today the phrases 'the LORD of Hosts' and 'God of Hosts' have little meaning...". (The NIV should give readers a little more credit!) This of course creates confusion in translating El-Shaddai, which is traditionally translated as 'God Almighty'. Here the NIV makes use of footnotes to indicate when the Hebrew reads El-Shaddai. The NJPS does a better job – compare for example Genesis 49:25 where the NJPS simply prints 'Shaddai'.

When Adonai and YHWH occur together as in Jeremiah 1:6 the NIV chose 'Sovereign LORD' while the NJPS chose the 'Lord GOD'. The Masoretes inserted the vowels for Adonai when they encountered the name YHWH to indicate that it was to be pronounced as Adonai (Lord). The exception is when Adonai and YHWH occur together in the text, in which case the Masoretes inserted the vowels from the word 'Elohim' (God), thus the NJPS rendering of 'Lord GOD'. Nothing seems to be gained by the NIV departing from this tradition of translation into English, in fact something seems to be lost.

A better solution may be to simply insert the Hebrew consonants of the divine name into the text of the English translation and to let the reader decide for himself how to deal with it when reading aloud. This is the approach that is found in a few LXX manuscripts as well, though typically the Greek term Kyrios (Lord) is employed. Premise for this may idea may also be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, some of which contain the name YHWH in Paleo-Hebrew in texts that are otherwise written in square Hebrew (Aramaic) characters. The NJPS does this in one verse – Exodus 6:3, where God appears to Moses and reveals the divine name. Here the NJPS provides a helpful footnote explaining that "The divine name is traditionally not pronounced; instead, Adonai, '(the) LORD,' is regularly substituted for it". For a longer discussion of the JPS approach see the article by David E. S. Stern.

Footnotes

The NJPS claims 5 reasons for using footnotes

1. Where a word or passage was not understood

2. When an alternative rendering was possible

3. Where an old, well know rendering was not retained (especially from 1917 version).

4. Noting another passage in the Bible that would help explain the passage at hand.

5. Important textual variants in the ancient manuscripts or versions

As will be shown below this last reason to footnote was not consistently followed. In the NIV the reasons to footnote are mentioned in the preface but are not laid out as nicely or as clearly as in the NJPS.

Kri v Ktiv

'Kri' (Hebrew 'read') refers to the traditional pronunciation of a word, which is different than the way it is spelt in the text 'Ktiv' (written). The Masoretes placed in the margin a variant that they believed to be the correct reading based on how the text was traditionally pronounced rather than changing the actual consonants of the text. They would also place vowel markings within the text that indicated the traditional pronunciation rather than the vowels that would normally accompany the consonants.

The NIV does not mark these variations in the text of the English, and often follows the Kri. The NJPS is available in a parallel Hebrew/English version, which allows one to check the actual Kri/Ktiv, both of which are printed within the Hebrew text, in addition to having the entire Hebrew Text next to the English translation.

Deviations from Masoretic Vowel Pointing

Concerning the NIV, the preface states: "Sometimes vowel letters and vowel signs did not, in the judgment of the translators, represent the correct vowels for the original consonantal text. Accordingly some words were read with a different set of vowels. These instances are usually not indicated by footnotes."[40] While it is consistent

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[40] Biblica - http://www.biblica.com/niv/mct/bible-hebrew-aramaic.php

with the eclectic method employed by the translators to consider different vowel pointing (and even word divisions), to not footnote such changes seems unwise, though even the NJPS, as stated in its preface, on rare occasion did this also.

Gender inclusiveness:

The NJPS includes the following note: "…masculine terms for God such as "He" should be understood as gender neutral unless the imagery of their context requires otherwise." (from the note on the copyright page of the JPS Hebrew English Tanakh). Within the translation itself the NJPS made some inconsistent attempts at 'gender neutrality' or 'inclusiveness'. One example is the parallel passages of Exodus 20:5 and Numbers 14:18. In the former the NJPS translates 'avot' as 'parents' and in the latter as 'fathers'. Here the NIV is consistent both with itself and with the Hebrew by translating 'avot' as 'fathers' in both places.

Both the NIV and NJPS are beginning to appear in new 'gender neutral' versions – the TNIV (Today's NIV) and the CJPS (Contemporary JPS – also called the TCT – *The Contemporary Torah* – released in 2006). These modern attempts at 'inclusiveness' are filled with translational problems:

In Gen 24:30 the NJPS (and NIV) translates 'ish' as 'man' correctly. The new CJPS, in being overzealous for gender neutrality, seeks to neuter Abraham's servant by changing 'man' to 'emissary', even though he is clearly a man based on both context and the use of masculine verbs in referring to him. Likewise in Num. 27:18 the CJPS seeks to neuter Joshua by changing him from an 'inspired man' (NJPS; Hebrew: 'ruach bo') to an 'inspired leader'.[41] Even sillier than this is the change in Deut. 19:5 from 'a man has two wives' (NJPS) to 'a householder has two wives' (CJPS). What is the CJPS trying to do here, for by translating 'ish' as householder they are actually implying that the man is the owner of possessions (a 'holder'), thus implying ownership of the 'wives' whereas the word 'man' does not carry this implication! Perhaps the CJPS is trying to leave room for same-sex marriages, but then what is the implication – a straight man or a lesbian with two wives. This just gets even weirder. Many more examples of the difficulties and

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[41] The NIV here reads 'a man in whom is the spirit' with a footnote indicating that perhaps 'spirit' should be capitalized allowing for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

oddities of 'gender neutrality' could be offered[42], but the following excerpt states well why gender neutering the bible should be avoided:

> To pretend that the ancient Near Eastern world of the Bible was not radically different from our own world would be to deprive Scripture of its historical context. "I think it's part of God's revelation in history that we take history, and we take the time-boundedness of a biblical writer, seriously," says William Holladay, an Old Testament panel member who teaches at Andover Newton Theological School, in Massachusetts. "Then, it's the teaching task of the church or the synagogue, it seems to me, to say, 'Well, all right, Jeremiah said it this way. What God intends through those words may be something a little bit different, so let's talk about that for a while.' "[43]

If the Bible is male-centric, the translations should let the reader sense this by translating literally the masculine nouns and pronouns.

COMPARISON OF SAMPLE PASSAGES IN NIV / NJPS

Exodus 12:40

NIV – "Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years."

NJPS – "The length of time that the Israelites lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years;"

Here the Hebrew is literally 'sons of Israel', unfortunately the NIV would seem to imply a Hebrew text that read 'people (עם) of Israel' instead of 'sons (בני) of Israel'. The NJPS chooses to use the word 'Israelites', which is accurate, but the word 'sons' is nowhere indicated in its English translation. Here one might guess the Hebrew text to read ישראלים, but that is not the case. Both of these translations apparently chose to depart from a literal translation of the Hebrew in order to be 'gender inclusive'.

Consistent with the NJPS translation principles, the vav at the beginning of the sentence is ignored, whereas the NIV translates it as 'now'. Both translations therefore

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[42] These examples and more can be found at http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/5531_5826.pdf in a review by Linda S. Schearing, Gonzaga University, Spokane Washington.

[43] http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/85feb/trans3.htm Copyright © 1985 by Barry Hoberman. All rights reserved. The Atlantic Monthly; February 1985; "Translating the Bible"; Volume 255, No. 2; pages 43-58.

do a good job of translating such passages into good English syntax by not always translating the numerous vav-conjunctives/consecutives that start Hebrew sentences as simply 'and'.

This passage is famous for creating a chronological difficulty as it stands in M. Many a biblical chronologist both ancient and modern has calculated that the Israelites were in Egypt for 210-215 years rather than 430 (Jones p56ff). Both Josephus[44] and the apostle Paul[45] have noted this. The NIV contains the helpful footnote "Masoretic Text; Samaritan Pentateuch and Septuagint *Egypt and Canaan.*" It is unclear whether these two ancient versions represent scribal insertions to correct the Hebrew text or whether they represent an earlier and/or different text than that represented by M.[46] However, it is certain that by adding 'and Canaan', the inner-chronological problem is solved.

By providing a footnote, the NIV proves more useful to the attentive reader. The NJPS on the other hand meets its own goals of simply representing M.

1ˢᵗ Samuel 13:1

NIV – "Saul was [thirty] years old when he become king, and he reigned over Israel [forty]-two years."

NJPS – "Saul was... years old when he become king, and he reigned over Israel two years."

Here is a well-known problem in M. The Hebrew literally reads 'Saul was one year old when he reigned and two years he reigned over Israel'. This of course cannot be the correct understanding of the text, for in the context Saul is obviously a grown man. Perhaps the passage could be read as "Saul reigned one year and in his second year of reigning over Israel he chose..."

The NIV footnote states that it adds the number 'thirty' based on a few late LXX manuscripts and adds 'forty' based on the number in Acts 13:21. Another footnote states that the end of the verse may be read as 'and when he had reigned over Israel two years,

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[44] Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 2.15.2

[45] Galatians 3:17

[46] I would not be quick to argue for a scribal addition to correct M, for in so many other places the LXX completely departs from M chronologically, rather than trying to correct M. (e.g. Genealogies in Gen. 1-11)

he'. While the mention of Acts 13:21 in the footnote is commendable, the change to the text by the NIV is not, since it lacks sufficient support.

The NJPS provides three dots to indicate a perceived omission in M. The NJPS footnote states that "The number is lacking in the Heb. text; also, the precise context of the 'two years' is uncertain. The verse is lacking in the Septuagint".

Here the NJPS approach seems better than that of the NIV for this verse seems to be setting the background for the story to come, which begins with the vav-consecutive in the next verse and not a summary of Saul's reign. The NIV apparently is adopting a formula found often in the book of Kings – for example 2nd Kings 12:1ff.

2nd Samuel 8:18

NIV – "...and David's sons were **royal advisors'**"

NJPS – "...and David's sons were **priests**"

Here the NJPS provides the literal reading, while the NIV only footnotes it. The NIV apparently seeks to skirt the problem of David making his sons כהנים 'priests'. This is rather ironic of both translations for in the NT Jesus is referred to as both king and priest. One would think that the Christian version would want to allow a premise for this by translating this verse literally, while the NJPS would seek to avoid such, yet we find the opposite. To its credit the NJPS is faithful to the Hebrew text here.

1st Chronicles 20:3

NIV – "and brought out the people who were there, **consigning them to labor** with saws and with iron picks and axes. David did this to all the Ammonite towns. Then David and his entire army returned to Jerusalem."

NJPS – "He led out the people who lived there **and he hacked them** with saws and iron threshing boards and axes; David did thus to all the towns of Ammon. Then David and all the troops returned to Jerusalem."

Here the NIV follows the parallel account in 2nd Samuel 12:31 and assumes that the Chronicler's account misspells וישר when it should have been spelt וישם as in 2nd Sam 12:31. The NIV also assumes that ובמגרות is mispelt and should likewise read as in 2nd Sam 12:31 ובמגזרת – ('and with axes'). The NIV does not footnote either of these changes.

The NJPS translation makes David sound barbaric – hacking all the people of the Ammonites to pieces. The NJPS does add the footnote "Meaning of Heb. uncertain. 2 Sam. 12:31 has "set them to work." This is consistent with the Diplomatic approach of this version. However, in the second problem, the NJPS simply reads "and axes" following the 2nd Samuel passage and footnotes the actual Hebrew reading.

The two translations both agree about the likely original reading, but the NJPS has the advantage of making the reader aware of the textual difficulty here.

1st Chronicles 21:1ff

In this famous biblical 'contradiction' the NIV makes no mention of the parallel passage in 2nd Samuel 24. The NJPS footnotes both passages cross-referencing them for the reader.

Job 1:6

NIV – "One day **the angels** came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them."

NJPS – "One day **the divine beings** presented themselves before the LORD, and the Adversary came along with them."

Both translations avoid a literal translation of 'sons of God', the NIV = 'angels', the NJPS = 'divine beings'. The NIV does footnote the actual Hebrew, while the NJPS provides no such note here. However the NJPS does provide a footnote in Genesis 6:2 where the Hebrew is the same. In that passage the NIV gives a literal translation – 'sons of God'. The NIV's inconsistency is likely due to the dispute among Christian scholars as to the nature of the 'sons of God' in Genesis – some scholars adhering to a belief that these were fallen beings consistent with the book of Enoch, while other scholars would claim that the 'godly line of Seth' is what the Hebrew refers to.

The NJPS footnotes 'the Adversary' with "Heb. ha-satan". The NIV simply translates the word as a proper name 'Satan', even though there is a definite article attached. The two approaches reflect Jewish and Christian understandings respectively. The NJPS seems superior here because it give the reader an idea of the function of 'ha-satan' – that is being an 'adversary' to God's people and mankind in general.

Psalm 8:5(6)

NIV – "You made him a little lower than the **heavenly beings**[e] and crowned him with glory and honor"

NJPS – "that You have made him little less than **divine,**[c] and adorned him with glory and majesty"

NIV (Hebrews 2:7) – "You made him a little lower than **the angels**; you crowned him with glory and honor..."

  Here both versions provide footnotes at the same point, however the NIV footnote reads "Or *than God*" and the NJPS reads "Or *'the angels'*". The Hebrew reads מאלהים – literally 'than God' but occasionally 'angels', which is what the LXX has. As can be seen from Hebrews 2:7 quoted above, the NIV is not consistent with itself. The NJPS at least seems consistent with Job 1:6 discussed above.

Psalm 22:16-17(17-18)

NIV – "Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, **they have pierced** my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me"

NJPS – "Dogs surround me; a pack of evil ones closes in on me, **like lions** [they maul] my hands and feet. I take the count of all my bones while they look on and gloat."

  The NIV contains a footnote stating "Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint and Syriac; most Hebrew manuscripts / *like the lion,*".

  NJPS footnote: "With Rashi; cf. Isa 38.13." which reads "Then it was as though a lion were breaking all my bones;". The context in the Isaiah passage is Hezekiah's prayer of thanksgiving to God for healing him and extending his life 15 years. While 'lion' and 'bones' are mentioned in both passages, the two terms do not seem to be tied together in the same sense as here in Psalms 22.

  The NJPS does not bother to mention the testimony of the other manuscripts, the Dead Sea Scrolls, or the ancient translations. This is representative of the anti-Jesus stance of the NJPS. For two millennium believers and non-believers have argued as to whether this passage refers to the crucifixion of Jesus. The Hebrew Masoretic text consonants end with a yud and can be read as a noun (lion). However if the spelling is corrected to read with a final vav instead, then it becomes a verb (they pierced or they

dug). By the time the Masoretes pointed the text with vowels, the dispute had lasted for a millennium. However the M reading is difficult to make sense of – thus the NJPS added words in brackets based on Rashi. The Psalms scroll from Nahal Hever (5/6HevPs) is textually close to M, and dates fom 50-68 AD. (Hegg) This manuscript has the vav ending instead of the yud, and thus agrees with the LXX reading[47].

The literal LXX reading is actually 'dug' but may imply 'pierced'. Either way, it is either the dogs or the band of evil men (lit. 'congregation of wicked ones') who are the subject of this verb.

In this passage the NIV footnote is too vague by simply stating 'some Hebrew manuscripts' and also failing to note the only other occurrence of the M reading (Is. 38:13). The NJPS, while mentioning the later fails to note the support for the LXX reading. This may be consistent with its desire to adhere to M, but is not consistent with the stated reason #5 to footnote in its preface and the NJPS already departs form M by implementing Rashi's reading in brackets. Surely the early versions should carry more weight than Rashi.

Psalm 53:1(2)

NIV – "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"
NJPS – "The benighted man thinks, 'God does not care'"

In translating the word נבל the NJPS is consistent with the principles outlined in its preface of not translating the same Hebrew word the same way in every passage. As shown by the table below, the NJPS committee was indeed overly resourceful in choosing ten different English words with which to translate this one Hebrew word. The NIV on the other hand must be commended for being very consistent and only varied in one passage.

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[47] Price makes a mistake here and speaks of the Nahal Hever text as containing an extra consonant, but that is not the case, it merely has a vav instead of a yud (Price p232).

Table showing the translation of the word נבל

Passage	NJPS	NIV
Deut 32:6	dull	foolish
1st Sam 25:25	boor	Fool
2nd Sam 3:33	churl	lawless
2nd Sam 13:13 - m.pl.	scoundrels	wicked fools
Job 2:10 – fem pl	shameless woman	foolish woman
Psalm 53:1(2)	benighted	fool
Psalm 74:18	base	foolish
Prov. 17:7,21	villain	fool
Jeremiah 17:11	fool	fool
Eze 13:3	degenerate	foolish

Although neither of the translation committees had 'Formal Equivalence' in mind, the original Hebrew text would be easier to reconstruct from the NIV, which thing seems worthy.[48] James White criticizes the KJV for employing a variety of English words to translate one Hebrew word (White p288) and would likely criticize the NJPS on the same grounds. However this was to the credit of the usefulness of the KJV, since it was implemented for decades as the primary tool of instruction for the English language in grade schools. By entering as many common English words as possible into the text of the translation, its usefulness as a reader was increased. However, it does not seem possible that the NJPS could use such a motivation as a reason for its diverse choice of English words, though the diversity does make it more 'readable' as a book.

In several places the NIV has footnotes indicating that the Hebrew standing behind the English 'fool' refers to one who is morally deficient thus distinguishing it from the English use of someone who is simply ignorant or uneducated.

Returning to our passage in Psalm 53, the choice of 'benighted' by the NJPS along with the rest of the translation, makes the passage apply less villainy to the person.

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[48] As Tov points out (p124) if a translation is done precisely then it is much easier to reconstruct a Hebrew Vorlage. This is important in understanding the value and use of ancient translations in trying to reconstruct the underlying Hebrew source.

Benighted carries the meaning of one who is immoral, but especially because of lack of opportunity (possibly due to poverty, ignorance, etc.). Thus the NJPS might be taken to mean 'God doesn't care for us therefore we are hopelessly immoral'. The NIV on the other hand seems to imply that the person in question deliberately rejects God, is an atheist, and thereby justifies his own immorality. In considering the value of either translation, one must consider the remainder of the context of this Psalm and the nature of a נבל elsewhere in the scriptures. One must also consider the underlying doctrines of the translation committees. This Psalm is important for Christian doctrine especially because of its use by the Apostle Paul in Romans 3:9ff.

To its credit the NJPS footnotes that Psalm 53 should be cross-referenced to Psalm 14. The two Psalms are almost identical yet contain significant differences, including the name for God. This helpful note exists in spite of the statement in the preface that "...this is not an academic Bible. We did not pack the page with details of interest to scholars alone." (NJPS xiv)

Amos 6:12

NIV – "Do horses run on the rocky crags? Does one plow there with oxen? But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness"

NJPS – "Can horses gallop on a rock? Can it be plowed with oxen? Yet you have turned justice into poison weed And the fruit of righteousness to worm wood."

Both versions here follow the consonantal division in the Masoretic text. The NJPS includes the following interesting footnote: "Meaning of Heb. uncertain; emendation yields "Can one plow the sea with oxen?" It has been suggested that three of the four lines are stating illogical possibilities but that the line about that oxen is not illogical. With that in mind scholars have suggested a different division of the consonants in order to produce the reading found in the NJPS footnote. Additionally with the deletion of one consonant (a vav used as a vowel), the sentence can be made passive – "can the sea be ploughed with oxen?" (Tov p357). Tov also states that the plural form of oxen is basically unattested, thus making the consonantal division in M suspicious.

However I would state that if solid rock is being spoken of in the first line, then the second line makes sense in M for it is impossible to plow solid rock.

The NJPS footnote is helpful in that it addresses the issue, but would be better if it read "a different consonantal division..." instead of "emendation...". Vague footnotes do more to cast doubt than to actually aid the reader.

Micah 5:1ff (4:14ff)

NIV – "Marshal your troops, O city of troops, for a siege is laid against us. They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod. But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans[a] of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins[b] are from of old from ancient times.[c]"

NJPS – "Now you gash yourself in grief[g]. They have laid siege to us; They strike the ruler of Israel on the cheek with a staff. And you, O Bethlehem of Ephrath[a], Least among the clans of Judah, From you one shall come forth to rule Israel for Me – One whose origin is from of old, from ancient times."

These verses have traditionally been considered Messianic. While it is no surprise that the NJPS departs form the traditional translation of מימי עולם as 'from eternity' (KJV) or the more literal 'from the days of eternity' (NASB) and instead chooses 'from ancient times'. It is a surprise to see the NIV relegate the literal reading to a footnote and to adopt the same in-text reading as the NJPS. Traditionally Christians have understood the literal reading of this passage to refer to the eternality of the Messiah, but the NIV and NJPS both allow for the view that the messiah's 'origins' are simply old (i.e. going back to king David). The NIV does at least footnote that the word 'origin' is actually the Hebrew word for 'goings out'. The NIV also follows the traditional chapter division, which includes the prophecy of Israel's ruler being struck on the cheek into Chapter 5, thus making the picture of Jesus more evident to the reader.

Both versions likewise translate אלפי as 'clans'[49] instead of the usual and literal 'thousands' (KJV/ASV). The NIV does not coordinate its translation with Matthew 2:6, which quotes this passage and reads 'rulers of Judah'. Here Matthew is a significant early witness to this passage as Matthew was originally composed in Hebrew and then

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[49] supported by Judges 6:15 and 1st Sam. 10:19, but 1st Sam 23:23 could go either way.

translated to Greek.[50] Indeed 'rulers' or 'princes' (KJV) is a reasonable translation of this Hebrew word based on Zechariah 12:5 and others (ignoring the vowel pointing).

Consistent with its translation of the Micah passage, the NJPS chooses to translate אלוף in Genesis 36:15 as 'clan', instead of as 'chief' (NIV) or 'duke'(KJV). This shows that the NJPS recognized the connection of the root to that in Micah 5:2(5:1). This lends further credence to translating the Micah passage as 'rulers of Judah' if one will translate the Genesis passage and elsewhere as 'duke', 'ruler' or 'governor'.

Conclusion

The Eclectic approach of the NIV saves King David from sounding Barbaric in 1st Chron. 20:3. However the wild guess about Saul's reign in 1st Samuel 13:1 could hardly be considered the reading of the autograph. The Diplomatic approach of the NJPS has much to commend it, except when the NJPS fails to note significant variants found in the DSS and/or LXX. If the NJPS never footnoted such variants than their lack in important passages would be understandable, however the lack of a footnote at Psalm 22:17-18 and in other Messianic passages can only be explained on an anti-Jesus basis.

The NJPS does do a good job of cross-referencing parallel passages, among them Psalm 53 to Psalm 14 and 1st Chronicles 21:1ff to 2nd Samuel 24. The NJPS footnotes tend to be clearer as well, especially with the addition of the definition of terms at the end of the volume. The NIV footnotes tend to be much more vague, often leaving the reader to guess what is meant by 'Or' and by 'some manuscripts'[51]. Even worse is when the NIV does not footnote a departure from the Hebrew text such as at 1st Chronicles 20:3.

The NIV does do a more consistent job of translating the word 'fool' as the chart about Psalm 53 above shows, thus allowing the reading to get a feel for the various contexts in which the word is used. However the NIV fails to consistently translate the

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[50] This view is debated today, but is supported in various places by the writings of Jerome, including his commentary on Matthew 23:35 and *Lives of Illustrious Men*, Book 5. That Matthew does not follow the LXX which reads 'thousands' is further evidence of Matthew's Hebrew original or at least to Matthew translating directly from the Hebrew of Micah and not quoting the LXX, thus diminishing the claimed importance of the LXX to the early Church.

[51] For an explanation of the NIV footnotes see: http://www.biblica.com/niv/mct/bible-footnotes.php

Hebrew term 'sons of God' and 'thousands'. The NJPS is slightly more consistent, as shown above, in these examples.

It is my opinion that both versions have largely succeeded in their goals of translating the Hebrew Bible into modern familiar English. Though both versions have significantly failed to retain a reasonable amount of consistency with previous English translations – especially that of the KJV. The NIV has especially failed in the area of the NT, where it makes several changes and even complete omissions to the Received Text when the Alexandrian text and other witnesses could not be shown to clearly support such as being consistent with the perceived autographs.

The Layout of both versions is much better than in previous Bibles, but here the NJPS excels and is truly a beautiful printing.

Overall, the NIV and NJPS are both well-done Dynamic Equivalent translations in-spite of the shortcomings pointed out in this paper. I have read the NIV, the KJV and the NASB cover-to-cover and found that the NIV, with its natural English style was much more enjoyable than the other two. This is the great advantage of a Dynamic Equivalent translation – it is readable. The NJPS parallel Hebrew / English version has much to commend it, however the NKJV parallel version is usually the one I grab first off the shelf, as the English of that version is a more literal (word-for-word) translation of the Hebrew than the NJPS version.

With the publication of the BHQ, the HUB and the OHB, future English translations will have the option of using a critical text based on either the Leningrad codex, the Aleppo crown or an eclectic text (the OHB). With these new options, the ever-increasing number of new English translations is only prone to grow even greater, as are the revisions to existing translations.

Finally, in the creation of the KJV, NRSV, NIV and the NJPS as well as other translations, there has been an over urgency in rushing to the printing press. Indeed Erasmus fell into the same snare. All of these versions were revised within a short period of time after their original publication, due to numerous errors and problems with the English of the text. The KJV may be excusable, but for the other versions such impatience is inexcusable. The NIV, which continues to be the best selling English bible

translation, is currently being revised (again!) and is due for release in 2011.[52] JPS is working on an online project revolving around the NJPS called the 'Tagged Tanakh'[53], which may eventually result in a new print version based upon the input received in this project.

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[52] http://nivbible2011.com/ - again showing the haste with which versions are released. One year hardly seems like sufficient time.

[53] http://taggedtanakh.org/

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