

# What Does a Translator Have to Offer the Reader?

A Response to Dr. C. John Collins

“What the Reader Wants and the Translator Can Give: 1 John As a Test Case”

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[This copy includes some minor proof-reading corrections and two brief, post-conf. notes.]

## Introduction

I would like to thank Dr. Buice for inviting me to serve as a respondent to Dr. Collins' plenary address. Thank you also to Dr. Collins for agreeing to the inclusion of a respondent. It is a simpler assignment to present a plenary address at a conference and then answer questions than it is to interact with a respondent who has read your paper in advance. I trust that the day will be no less joyful for our speaker due to the format that Dr. Buice has proposed!

That the paper to which I have been asked to respond was written by Dr. Collins makes my task both easier and harder. It is much easier to respond to a well-written paper from someone qualified to treat the subject and who understands the issues involved in translation. Not everyone who has voiced the view which John defends is so qualified. But no one should question John's qualifications. (I trust neither he nor you will be offended if I address my remarks to him as John; no disrespect is intended, and it is less clumsy than constant reference to Dr. Collins.) As the OT editor of the ESV, he knows what is involved in translation. I am quite sure that having spent untold hours working on the ESV that he understands those complexities far better now than he did ten years ago. As a Ph.D. from the Oriental Department from Liverpool who can work capably with at least English, Biblical Hebrew, modern Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, Latin, and also (I assume) French and German, and quite likely Ugaritic as well, he certainly understands the languages which are relevant to translating the Bible. (I would not at all be surprised if John could add other languages to that list.) He has also demonstrated his abilities in his publication of three major books as well as numerous articles in the journals.<sup>1</sup> This is definitely not the C. John Collins who sells calf feeding equipment in Inkberrow, Worcester, UK!<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (P&R, 2006); *Science & Faith: Friends or Foes?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003) [reviewed by Vern S. Poythress, *Westminster Theological Journal* 66.2 (2004): 468-73, available online at <<http://tinyurl.com/pw2ho>>]; *The God of Miracles: An Exegetical Examination of God's Action in the World* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000) [reviewed by J. Hay, *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 20.2 (2002): 225-26]. Chapters in books written or edited by others include “What the Reader Wants and the Translator Can Give: 1 John As a Test Case,” in *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005); and “Without Form, You Lose Meaning,” in *The Word of God in English* (L. Ryken), pp. 295-319. He has also contributed to the *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology*, and written a

But having a worthy discussion partner not only makes my job easier, it also makes it more difficult in that a casual response will hardly do. He is also an OT prof whereas I work in the NT (thankfully his test case comes from 1 John!). For the record, I have not been involved in the production of any translation of the Bible, so I do not come as a fellow ESV team member, nor do I have any connection with other recent translations (TNIV, HCSB, NLT, etc.). I have published a review of the ESV,<sup>3</sup> an abridged version of which was presented at national ETS two years ago. Since John heard that paper, he probably has some idea where I'm coming from.

The paper which John presented today has already been published in the Crossway volume designed to make the case for "essentially literal" translation<sup>4</sup> and he presented an abridged version of it at national ETS two years ago. It is a paper well worth reading carefully. I appreciate his concern for accuracy in the translation of the biblical text. We may disagree somewhat in how that is best accomplished, but we are seeking the same goal. Dr. Buice could have generated a much more "charged" response if he had invited some other scholars, but I suspect that there is still sufficient material for a helpful discussion.

As I understand his paper, John is arguing that the primary purposes of a Bible translation (use in the church and in the home; he excludes outreach from his primary focus) are best served by what he calls an "essentially literal" translation. The major reason for this is that this is the only sort of translation which accurately presents the meaning of the text without introducing or omitting information not explicitly or implicitly found in the text itself. This preserves the text for the reader without undue interference (in the form of "clarification") from a translator. This, John asserts, is what the reader wants and what the translator can provide.

## Contributions

There are three contributions in this paper that I think are particularly helpful. First, John's discussion of translation in terms of "recognized linguistic operations" (83) could be a helpful alternative to some of the uninformed alternatives that I have heard. Although the term is not defined in the paper, it is intended as part of the definition of "essentially literal" in contrast to what might be called wooden literalism. This represents the "wobble room" in the translation theory to accommodate the differences between the donor language and the receptor language so as to produce a translation with acceptable grammar and style. I would suggest that these "recognized linguistic operations" need to be defined and quantified so as to serve as guidelines for translation and also perhaps as a more

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number of journal articles (*Westminster Theological Journal*, *Bible Translator*, *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics*, *Presbyterian*, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> <<http://www.agregister.co.uk/company-75018887.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> "The English Standard Version: A Review Article," *Journal of Ministry and Theology* 8.2 (2004): 5–56. My review concludes that the ESV is a "viable" translation which is generally "accurate and readable" (52). I also suggested that "my overall assessment of the ESV is a positive one" (55) and that especially with the forthcoming revisions and "tweaks" of the second edition it "stands to be a very serviceable translation for many years" (56).

<sup>4</sup> I will refer to the pages in the published edition rather than the manuscript copy that he sent to me last week. His presentation today may well have been revised, but this response was based on the written text. (See n.1 for publication details.)

precise means of defining the relative position of a translation on the spectrum of translation method. If John were to develop this concept with some specific guidelines and limits it would avoid this terminology being construed to legitimize the complex transformations employed by Chomskyan generative grammar—and, more significantly, the “quasi-Chomskyan”<sup>5</sup> methodology of Eugene Nida’s thorough-going<sup>6</sup> functional equivalence.<sup>7</sup>

David Bell’s dissertation at the University of Alicante (Spain) has attempted something along this line, though his numerical quantifications are designed to judge the result of the “linguistic operations” rather than to guide their application.<sup>8</sup> Although guidelines for prescriptive operations would be different from Bell’s descriptive ones, the principle is similar and might be helpful.

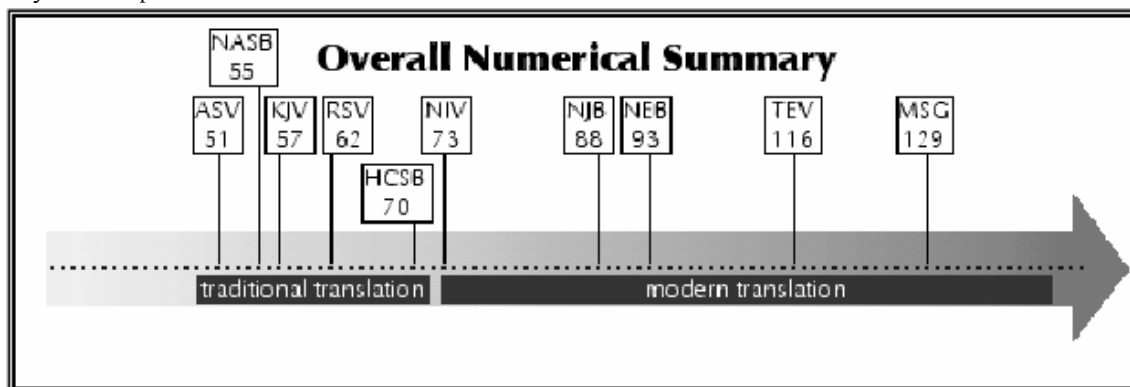
Second, John’s is the first paper from a formal equivalent position that I remember reading which actually defines what “interpretive” means in the context of formal equivalence translation theory. That term is bandied about too loosely with little thought as to what it means. It almost becomes a swear word in describing translations less formal than the speaker prefers (often synonymous with “dynamic equivalent”). In such a context, D. A. Carson’s rebuke that all translation is interpretive is well deserved.<sup>9</sup> John’s alternative is to define “interpretive translation” as one which “has gone beyond

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Nichols describes Nida’s model as “quasi-Chomskyan” (“Translating the Bible: A Critical Analysis of E. A. Nida’s Theory of Dynamic Equivalence and Its Impact Upon Recent Bible Translations,” Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Sheffield, 1996), 62.

<sup>6</sup> I view a thorough-going use of functional equivalence (as evident, e.g., in the CEV) with a certain degree of skepticism in terms of being helpful in mainline translations of the Bible. I do not oppose the use of such tools as part of the analysis process, but would tend to be more cautious in their use in the actual wording of the translation.

<sup>7</sup> See the extensive discussions of and guidelines for analysis, transformation, and restructuring in Eugene A. Nida and Charles Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), helpfully summarized (and critiqued) by Nichols, “Translating the Bible,” 56–85.

<sup>8</sup> David B. Bell, “A Comparative Analysis of Formal Shifts in English Bible Translations,” Ph.D. diss., University of Alicante (Spain), 2005. Bell catalogs 18 linguistic operations to account for formal changes from source to donor texts (70–81) which he then subjects to a mathematical formula to arrive at a quantification of the degree of formal equivalence in any given translation (81–86). Bell’s conclusions are skewed by two factors: he includes *The Message* as one of his “translations,” and he apparently divides his group of ten translations in half (five are judged “traditional” and five “modern”) even though the distribution of the numerical scores he assigns clearly suggests a grouping of 4 traditional, 2 “modified-traditional” [my designation] and 4 modern. (He divides between two translations that are within 3 points of each other whereas the next higher score is separated by 15 points.) One might wish that he had included ESV, CEV and NLT in place of RSV and MSG. His summary chart on p. 314 is as follows:



<sup>9</sup> “Every reading of a text by a finite being is an interpretation of it. There are more faithful interpretations and less faithful interpretations, more accurate interpretations and less accurate interpretations, but we cannot avoid interpretations.... Translators must *understand* the donor text, or think they do, before rendering it into the receptor text”

what the linguistic details require, and that it forecloses interpretive options for the English reader.... perhaps a cumbersome phrase like ‘more interpretive than linguistically necessary’ helps convey the actual critique” (84 n. 16). Although I will take issue with an example of “foreclosing” later in my response, the attempt at a definition is an important one.

I would suggest that this explanation needs to be used with the recognition that “linguistically necessary” may be as much on the part of the *receptor* language as that of the donor language. This is not as obvious in English translations since, 1. there is sufficient linguistic similarity between English and Greek (not so much with Hebrew), and 2. we have a long history of English translations of the Bible with the resultant impact of the English Bible on both western culture and on the English language. This is not the case with many missionary translations into non-Western, non-IndoEuropean languages.<sup>10</sup> The grammatical structures and (formal) categories are sometimes quite different, requiring functional equivalents in which the translator *must add* (or omit!) information. I have in mind here such things as honorific forms, inclusive/exclusive we, additional tenses or cases, as well as the absence of forms such as the passive voice or dual number—all of which pose translational problems. So too do languages which have the same formal features but with different semantic values attached (e.g., the perfect form in English and Greek).

Third, the reminder that a translation should reflect distantiation is salutary. That is what John has in mind when he refers to the “shared world between the author and his audience [as] inherently foreign” (90). It is also reflected in his quotation from Anthony Nichols to the effect that “a good translation of the NT will preserve a sense of historical and cultural distance” (91).<sup>11</sup> This is the opposing pole of functional equivalence’s emphasis on a translation sounding natural. There is some inherent tension between these two emphases. I do not think any translator would want to produce a totally unnatural text, and neither is it likely that someone would want to produce a translation that would cause a reader to think that the biblical story was not an ancient narrative. Although the *language* of a translation should, I think, be natural (in that it is proper, acceptable, intelligible in the receptor language), the world presented should be clearly that of the Bible, not a tamed, modernized world.<sup>12</sup>

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(D. A. Carson, “Translation and Treason,” ch. 3 of *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998], 72).

<sup>10</sup> I think we ought to be more cautious in speaking of translation philosophy in an American/western context in which we do have a long history of the Bible in our language. Any principle upon which we insist for English ought also to be true for any other language (to the extent that it is not language-specific). I fear that some of our pronouncements would seem a bit foolish in other contexts. (I do not refer to John’s paper in this note, but to *all* the discussions “on both sides of the aisle” of late.)

<sup>11</sup> The quotation from Nichols goes on to say, “it [i.e., a Bible translation] will take the modern reader back into the alien milieu of first century Judaism where the Christian movement began. It will show him how the gospel of Jesus appeared to a Jew, and not how that Jew would have thought had he been an Australian or an American” (“Dynamic Equivalence Bible Translations,” *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* 19 [1986]: 45–53, at 53).

<sup>12</sup> I would suggest that this distantiation should not be taken to the extent that the result is unintelligible. For example, items such as weights and measures as well as monetary units should, I think, be “naturalized” into (approximate) local units unless some specific semantic value is associated with such an expression that is only intelligible in original units. (I cannot think of any situations where that is the case, but theoretically I would acknowledge that as a possibility.) An alternative might be to keep the original terms in the text if a note were always added giving an approximate modern value. Simply appending a

For all of these contributions to the discussion I am thankful. They point to some helpful areas in which progress could be made in improving both translations and the discussion of them. There are some additional areas in which I would like to raise some questions for discussion. (I am no less thankful for them, but I have selected them for our attention, fully realizing that we could profitably spend the rest of the weekend exploring matters on which John has commented.)

## Points for Discussion

### *1. Definitions and Terminology*

One of the most basic issues that demands attention is defining just exactly what is meant by translation. John never really offers a technical definition of translation. The closest he comes is his analogy of the reader “listen[ing] in on the original foreign language communication, without [the translator] prejudging what [the reader is] to do with that communication” (106, see also 90). This needs to be made much more precise.

I would suggest that we might say something along these lines: Bible translation is an act of communication by which the meaning of the original text of Scripture (in the source languages Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) is reproduced in a receptor language in such a way that a reader of the receptor language text can accurately and reliably understand the original meaning as intended by the original author. The goal of Bible translation is communication—accurate communication of an objective, historically-rooted, written divine revelation. Translation does not consist of a simplified summary of the Bible’s message (what we might call a paraphrase); it is rather an attempt to convey all the meaning as precisely as possible.

Exactly how one communicates accurately and precisely is, however, a debated question. Regardless of the method or the result we must realize that there is no such thing as a perfect translation. Good ones, yes, but none that are perfect. This has long been recognized. We read in the Talmud that “he who translates a verse literally is a liar, and he who paraphrases is a blasphemer!”<sup>13</sup> Cicero, when translating Plato into Latin, bemoans the challenge:

It is hard to preserve in a translation the charm of expressions which in another language are most felicitous.... If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if compelled by necessity I alter anything in the order or wording, I shall seem to have departed from the function of a translator.

The Italian proverb “Traduttore traditore” (translators [are] traitors) reflects the same reality. This is not because translators deliberately distort their text;<sup>14</sup> it simply recognizes that “it is impossible not

table of weights and measures is not particularly helpful since it is not only clumsy, but many readers never discover it. This is not an easy question (monetary values are most difficult given their continual fluctuation), but a translation should at least be consistent on this matter.

<sup>13</sup> Rabbi Yehuda in Talmud Bavli, Nashim: Kiddushin 49a.

<sup>14</sup> The proverb should not be pressed too far—and no one who cites it in connection with translation does so (though it has been implied that some do so [Vern Poythress and Wayne Grudem, *The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*

to lose something when you translate an extended text from one language to another”<sup>15</sup>—and usually something not in the donor text is added as well! The translator must keep this differential as low as possible.

Once we have settled a definition of translation, we are then faced with the challenge of appropriate terminology to describe how we go about the task. John works with a three-fold description: literal, essentially literal, and dynamic equivalence. I wonder if this is the best way to describe our efforts? His triangular model (84) does not appear to present three axes; there are still only two criteria: literalness and dynamicity. There is no “value” for the vertical axis on the diagram, which still relates to literality. To append “essentially” does not discriminate a third value, but only says something regarding “how literal” a translation is, but then we are back on the literal/dynamic axis.<sup>16</sup>

Using “essentially literal” is no different from the NKJV and HCSB employing “optimal equivalence” and “complete equivalence” to position their product. All three are simply a designation by the translators (or their marketing departments?!) for their preferred balance point on the literal/dynamic spectrum. The choice of “essentially,” “optimal,” or “complete” may be a useful marketing tool, but I am not persuaded that it serves as a helpful quantifier. There is nothing inherent in the term which specifies how the opposing factors are to be balanced.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps we could consider “transparency” as a third axis if we defined it as John does (83), but then we should have a diagram with all translations scattered at various points *within* the plot area—not all listed at a vertex. If we adopted this approach, we would also have to distinguish “literalness” from transparency, but that would be particularly difficult since literal is often discussed/defined in terms of

(Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004), 183–84]). A traitor is one who deliberately betrays; a translator inevitably betrays (in that he or she cannot represent the original perfectly), but not deliberately in an attempt to pervert the original.

<sup>15</sup> Carson, *Inclusive Language Debate*, 58. The Italian proverb illustrates this quite nicely since in the original language there is a deliberate play on the pronunciation of the two words (which are practically identical when you hear a native-Italian speaker recite the proverb!)—but the word play is totally lost in English where the words *translator* and *traitor* do not sound similar (though perhaps a weakened alliteration might be claimed).

<sup>16</sup> Even if we were to use what I consider to be a better term, “formal equivalence,” we would still have the same problem since John emphasizes the importance of *form* for meaning—almost treating it as a synonym for “essentially literal” (see John’s essay, “Without Form, You Lose Meaning”).

<sup>17</sup> If we wanted to consider other possible topologies, we might consider the proposal of de Vries, which consists of three poles: formal, functional, and semantic equivalence (Lourens De Vries, “Bible Translations: Forms and Functions,” *The Bible Translator* 52 [2001]: 306–19). His own terminology is form-oriented, interpretation-oriented, and meaning-oriented. The alternate terms are used here to enable an easier comparison with the standard categories. This proposal is worth further study; I have encountered it only recently and am not prepared to evaluate it at this time. My initial impression is that “interpretation” and “meaning” are not sufficiently distinct. Since de Vries defends his view by appeal to H. Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” in P. Cole and J. Morgan, *Syntax and Semantics*, v. 3 (New York: Academic Press, 1975), 41–58 (to which I do not have access presently), it is difficult to evaluate his ideas in greater detail. Stanley Porter surveys several entirely different topologies, some of which are quite recent (“Some Issues in Modern Translation Theory and Study of the Greek New Testament,” *Currents in Research: Biblical Studies* 9 [2001]: 350–82). Another treatise on the subject that also casts the discussion in wider, more diverse categories is Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*. I have likewise only begun reading and digesting Gutt’s work.

the same categories which John uses for transparency.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps I am missing something here, but I do not see how we have three contrasting values with which to triangulate various models.

Although John thinks it inadequate (“because it does not allow for what might be called an ‘essentially literal’ or ‘transparent’ translation” [82]), I really think that we are better off retaining the more traditional continuum from “more formal” to “more functional”<sup>19</sup> rather than trying to isolate three distinct categories. Any individual translation may be judged to use a greater or lesser degree of formal or functional equivalence and thus fall on a different part of the translation spectrum. No translation can completely ignore the form of the original. If it did, one would not have a translation at all but a new work altogether. On the other hand, no translation can be completely formal if it is to communicate with any degree of accuracy in another language. It is not possible to translate any extended literary corpus without employing both formal and functional equivalence.

I suspect that one reason this sort of explanation might be unwelcome is that it would associate the term “functional equivalence” with the ESV. That is, if all translations employ it to some degree, then there should be some in the ESV as well.<sup>20</sup> But perhaps that is an over-reaction to terminology. If we

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<sup>18</sup> An additional complication is that Crossway would also have to develop a new marketing campaign to replace the ambiguous term “essentially literal”!

<sup>19</sup> *Formal* and *functional* are much more workable terms than *literal* and *dynamic*. They are not only parallel terms, but *formal* can be more easily defined than *literal*, and *dynamic* has been replaced in the more technical discussions by *functional*. This is not just a change of terms, but of definition. *Dynamic equivalence* was defined as “the quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that *the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors*” (Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 202, emphasis added). But as Carson points out, this is a bit silly, if well-intentioned (*Inclusive Language Debate*, 71). Do we really want to produce the same response? In many (if not most) cases, of course, we have no way of knowing just what the original recipients’ response was. The Corinthians, as one example, responded quite poorly to Paul’s letter which we know as 1 Corinthians! The goal of translation should not be defined in terms of response, but of accurate communication of meaning. Nida set forth his statement in 1986 as to the reason for the change of terminology and definition (Jan de Waard and Eugene A. Nida, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating* [Nashville: Nelson, 1986], vii–viii). Much of that reason revolved around a misunderstanding of the translation method and the abuse of it by some translators.

<sup>20</sup> There are significant functional equivalents in the ESV; my published review (see n. 3) cites a number of examples. Here are four—all of them (except, perhaps, Matt 19:28) good decisions in my mind; I am not being critical of the ESV in this regard. **1 Tim 3:10**, “then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless.” Formally this reads, “then let them serve being blameless.” The use of “if” is justifiable if the adverbial participle ὄντες is understood as a conditional participle, but the additions of “as deacons” and “prove themselves” are interpretive/exegetical additions which, even though an accurate understanding of Paul’s point here, is not what the text actually says; it makes implicit information explicit. **Matt 19:28**, “in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit ...” (ἐν τῇ παλιγγενεσίᾳ, ὅταν καθίσῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). Translating παλιγγενεσία as “new world” is not unique (it was already in the RSV), but it certainly raises eyebrows in terms of being a “literal” translation. The word παλιγγενεσία means renewal, rebirth, or regeneration. It is a very interpretive choice to translate this as to imply a particular interpretation. **John 9:30** provides a functional, idiomatic translation—and a good one: “Why, this is an amazing thing!” (ἐν τούτῳ γὰρ τὸ θαυμαστόν ἐστιν—formally, “for in this is the amazing thing). There is not an equivalent in Greek of the English “why...!” but the ESV has made a superb choice to catch the tone implied in this context. **Acts 28:11**, “a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead” (Ἀλεξανδρίνῳ, παρασήμῳ Διοσκούροις). The ESV not only adds the words “a ship,” but nicely smoothes out the terse Greek which reads (formally), “in Alexandria, in a figurehead, Dioscuris.” The text is probably to be read as a proper name, “with the Dioscuris on the figurehead,” but that is opaque to English readers who would not recognize that Dioscuris is the title of the gods Castor and Pollux (the “heavenly twins”). Even NASB—the most formal of the standard translations—contains some interesting functional equivalents. E.g., in Amos 6:10 NASB substitutes a modern functional equivalent, “undertaker,” in place of “the one burning him” or “his burner” (referring to someone who was to cremate dead bodies).

define a functional equivalent as a translation choice which alters the grammatical form when necessary to preserve accuracy of meaning, then we have really not said anything different from appealing to “recognized linguistic operations” to accommodate the receptor language.<sup>21</sup>

## 2. *The form/meaning question*

A second major area that could profitably be discussed in greater detail is the question of the relationship between form and meaning—a perennial issue in discussion of translation. John’s paper touches on this at a number of points, but his major discussion of it comes in an earlier essay, “Without Form, You Lose Meaning.”<sup>22</sup> I agree with John that this dichotomy can be unhelpful if overdrawn. He cites Beekman and Callow to the effect that the form is a somewhat arbitrary vehicle for communicating meaning, largely determined by the specific language in use.<sup>23</sup> I doubt that anyone would argue that this is sometimes the case in that rarely do languages have identical sets of forms; some adjustment is always necessary in translation.<sup>24</sup> But John’s concern is that this is oversimplified—form *does* communicate meaning. His objection is that this frequently goes beyond accurately communicating meaning to *clarifying* meaning—i.e., making the author’s meaning more clear in the receptor language than it was in the donor language, and sometimes does so to the detriment of the original meaning if the translation ends up *changing* the meaning (even though this is unintentional).<sup>25</sup>

John’s first example of this problem is the translation of 1 John 4:8 (ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, God is love) as “God loves.” Unfortunately, this example (cited from Beekman and Callow) refers to those languages in which abstract nouns (in this case, ἀγάπη) can *only* be translated by a verb.<sup>26</sup> In such cases there is no other choice; it is not possible to say “God is love”—at least in that form in that language. To be fair,

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<sup>21</sup> This is not to say that every translation follows functional equivalence as the primary goal (as in the “mainline” functional translations such as GNB, CEV, NLT, etc.).

<sup>22</sup> Appendix to *The Word of God in English* by Leland Ryken (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 295–319. Since John does appeal to this article in his present paper (e.g., 82 n.12), I have taken the liberty to draw material from it as well.

<sup>23</sup> Their statement, in its context, reads as follows: A comparison can be made between the linguistic form of a language, as a means of carrying the meaning, and a ‘conveyor’ or vehicle. Suppose a road is used to represent one language and a canal a different one. A car is needed to convey passengers by road; to convey the same passengers by water a different vehicle is needed, namely, a boat of some sort. The same is true with conveying meaning. One language will use a certain form to carry the meaning; a different language will use a different form, even though it is the same meaning that is being transmitted. Further, just as you would not attempt to transfer parts of the car to the boat when changing vehicles, so you should not attempt to transfer the grammatical and lexical forms of the original to the RL [receptor language] when translating. *The forms are simply a ‘vehicle’ with which to get the message across to the recipients.* If the correct meaning is not conveyed to the hearers, it may well be that the translator is not sufficiently familiar with the linguistic form of the RL, or he has an erroneous concept of what translation is. It is like trying to run a boat as if it were a car” (John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974], 24–25; italics added to mark the portion cited by Collins, “Without Form, You Lose Meaning,” 298).

<sup>24</sup> For example, if I am to translate an English statement containing a gerund into koine Greek, I cannot use a gerund since Greek does not have gerunds. In this case I am most likely going to use an infinitive as the closest natural equivalent in Greek (or perhaps a participle in some instances).

<sup>25</sup> Part of the problem, especially with missionary translations, is that many (most?) translators in such contexts are not proficient in Hebrew and Greek.

<sup>26</sup> Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 26; John cites this example on p. 298 of “Without Form, You Lose Meaning.”

John also goes on to cite instances from contemporary *English* translations which do some similar things. Many of these involve such things as objective/subjective genitives or figures of speech, etc.<sup>27</sup>

A related area is the potential ability of a formal translation to preserve deliberate verbal repetitions/echoes that the author intended to be semantic. John provides a good illustration of this in 1 John with the use of the word μένω (96–99). I agree with him at this point that the use of μένω is a semantic matter in John. I am not at all surprised at the data cited from the NLT, and I think the NIV could have done a bit better. But I suspect that all translations, formal included, are inconsistent on this point, not only because scholars may differ as to where such patterns *are*, indeed, semantic, but also because as committee projects (as they should be) consistency isn't easy—even with the ability to cross-check such things by computer. English style also takes its toll here, as do other matters more directly related to the original languages, such as linguistic collocation (the use of word pairs to communicate particular meaning).<sup>28</sup>

The ESV generally fares well in such instances, but it is not consistent. For example, if the example had not been μένω in 1 John, but σοφός in 1 Corinthians 1–3,<sup>29</sup> the TNIV would be preferable on this matter. The allusion to God's wisdom is relevant to the expression “wise builder,” but σοφός ἀρχιτέκτων [3:10] is a “skilled builder” in the ESV.<sup>30</sup> I have discussed a number of other words (ψυχή, σάρξ, etc.) in a similar context in my review of the ESV.<sup>31</sup> This is also a valid consideration at the phrase level where nearly identical phrases occur. Unless there are other considerations, one would expect that such phrases in the same author would likely be translated the same in similar contexts. But notice what happens to οὐ θέλω δὲ ὑμᾶς ἀγνοεῖν in the ESV:

Rom 1:13	I want you to know ( <i>bis</i> );
Rom 11:25	I want you to understand;
1 Cor 1:8	I want you to know;
1 Cor 12:1	I do not want you to be uninformed;
2 Cor 1:8	we do not want you to be ignorant;
1 Thess. 4:13	we do not want you to be uninformed.

I do not want to press the matter unduly; it is enough to point out that there are inconsistencies in all translations. Illustrations of such matters can be found in all of them. The difference is not their

<sup>27</sup> He cites, among other examples, the CEV of 2 Cor 5:14 (ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ), “Christ’s love for us” (rather than leaving it ambiguous, “the love of Christ,” which could also mean “our love for Christ”), or Prov 5:15 (formally, as in NIV, “drink water from your own cistern...”) becoming “you should be faithful to your wife” (CEV—though the water/well imagery is retained in the 2d half of the couplet). Other factors include literary form and culturally [un]intelligible statements.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Strauss provides some helpful charts showing how collocation works. See his article “Form, Function, and the ‘Literal Meaning’ Fallacy in Bible Translation,” paper presented at the national ETS conf., Atlanta, Ga., 2003, 13 (an example with ποιέω as translated in NASB), or a much longer version of the same chart (this time with the ESV) in “Do Literal Bible Versions Show Greater Respect for Plenary Inspiration? (A Response to Wayne Grudem),” paper presented at the national ETS conf., 2005, Valley Forge, Pa., 4–5.

<sup>29</sup> The word σοφός occurs 10× in chs. 1–3 out of 11× in the entire book of 1 Cor, and if we add the noun σοφία, we have another 16 (of 17), for a total of 26/28, so it is obvious that wisdom is a major Pauline theme in this section of the book.

<sup>30</sup> I am indebted to Mark Strauss first pointing out this example to me. See his paper, “Literal Bible Versions,” 5.

<sup>31</sup> Decker, “The ESV: A Review Article,” 34–36.

presence or absence; it is one of degree. If it is legitimate once, it is legitimate more frequently. The difference of opinion is as to how often this is the case.

It is important to note that functional equivalence translation theory is not an excuse to do whatever the translator wants with the text. The standard textbook on functional equivalence guards such changes carefully and explicitly spells out the circumstances in which it is and is not legitimate to make a change in the form of the original.<sup>32</sup> Using a functional equivalent expression in a translation is not perfect, but neither is a formal equivalent in many cases! At times a functional equivalent can facilitate accurate communication more effectively than a formal one. A functional expression may make *linguistically* implicit information explicit, which, though sometimes helpful in terms of understanding, does change an implication into an assertion.<sup>33</sup> Though this may sound “dangerous,” it is also dangerous if a formal equivalent either does not communicate or communicates inaccurately due to the reader’s lack of ability to decipher implicit information. This is frequently the case with cultural information (which a translation should probably not attempt to resolve, at least in the text) and idiomatic expressions,<sup>34</sup> but is also true at the grammatical-syntactical level where there is not semantic equivalence with similar grammatical forms.<sup>35</sup> There are limitations of using functional equivalents in translation, but the careful and cautious use of such is essential in any attempt to communicate the text of Scripture accurately.<sup>36</sup> For several good examples of doing this very thing, see the examples from the ESV (! ☺ ) cited in n. 20. There you will find the ESV both making a *linguistically* implicit connotation of conditionality explicit (taking ὄντες as a conditional adverbial participle; 1 Tim 3:10), and even more interesting, making *culturally* implicit information explicit (identifying the referent as a ship with the twin gods as a figurehead, Acts 28:11).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Nida and de Waard, *From One Language to Another*, 36–40.

<sup>33</sup> On this, see De Vries, “Bible Translations,” 309–12.

<sup>34</sup> Whether or not an idiom should be reproduced may well depend on whether it is a “live” or “dead” figure. On this, see the two chapters in Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 124–50. Here is another place where a cautious translator might want to be generous in the use of notes: if the text retains a formal equivalent, the notes should offer the functional equivalent, or vice versa.

<sup>35</sup> This can be seen most easily if one compares the Greek genitive construction with similar “of constructions” in English (or in other languages, e.g., Dutch *van*, German *von*, Spanish/French *de*, etc.). Although often treated as equivalents by those with little language fluency, the semantic range and collocations of these similar terms is quite different (see De Vries, “Bible Translations,” 310–11). “Of” is one of the most flexible of all English prepositions and expresses a very broad range of semantic values. Not every possible meaning of “of” in English is a valid possibility for every Greek statement in which “of” might be used. To leave a translation as ambiguous as “of” when the grammar of a passage justifies a more explicit, clear, and helpful translation is a curious choice to enshrine lack of meaning! As Bob Milliman asks, “will average readers take the necessary steps to make an intelligent decision in these matters when reading a literal, word-for-word translation?” (“Translation Theory and Twentieth-Century Versions,” in *One Bible Only*, ed. R. Beacham and K. Bauder, 134–54 (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 142). See also the perceptive discussion of this in Mark Strauss, “Form, Function, and the ‘Literal Meaning’ Fallacy in Bible Translation,” 21–22. Other examples besides the genitive and English “of” are discussed on 11–18. An abridged version of this article was published in *The Bible Translator* 56.3 (2005): 153–68.

<sup>36</sup> D. A. Carson addressed some of these limitations in his article “The Limits of Dynamic Equivalence in Bible Translation,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 9 (1985): 200–13. This article has been substantially revised and expanded in his newer article, “The Limits of Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation—And Other Limits, Too,” ch. 3 of *The Challenge of Bible Translation*, ed. Scorgie, et al., 65–113. See also his article “New Bible Translations: An Assessment and Prospect,” in *The Bible in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Howard Clark Kee, 37–67 (New York: American Bible Society, 1993), with responses on 68–88.

<sup>37</sup> On the matter of making implicit information explicit, see section 3, p. 12 of this response.

I think we need to do two things in this area. One is to work on quantifying the sort of changes that are usually acceptable, and second is to realize that we cannot assume that all form is necessarily semantic. Though one may not agree with their decisions in every case, we must credit the proponents of functional equivalence as a translation model (i.e., as opposed to those of us, like myself, who are willing to use it more liberally than others *within* a more formal model) with having done a better job of discussing the sort of changes that are helpful, allowable, or verboten. We need men like John and perhaps Bill Mounce (the NT editor of the ESV) to write books of the scope and detail of *Translating the Word of God* (Beekman and Callow), *The Theory and Practice of Translation* and *From One Language to Another* (both by Nida), and *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (ed. Scorgie, et al). It is particularly *unhelpful* to have books about translation written by those with no knowledge of the biblical languages.<sup>38</sup>

Second, we cannot assume that all form is semantic. Examples of specific cases surely are and John has demonstrated that well in 1 John. But that does not mean that all form must be. Before we can criticize variation at the formal level we must be able to show *why* the formal element in question is semantic. In situations where the form of the original *is* semantic, it *is* ideal if the form can be represented in the translation in an equivalent or analogous form. Sometimes this is possible, but we should accept that sometimes it is not. The elaborate alliterative/acrostic structure (form) of some parts of the Old Testament cannot be reproduced in English without producing an English monstrosity.<sup>39</sup> In this case a note may be appropriate, or, in the case of Psalm 119, the Hebrew letters may be retained as section headings along with an explanatory note. Although the formal epistolary nature of the Pauline corpus can be maintained formally, an untaught English reader will not recognize the genre since the form of a first century letter is markedly different from the form of a twenty-first century letter.<sup>40</sup> In this case the form of the original is probably best preserved even though it is semantically obscure since transposing the entire letter into a “Dear Timothy...” form would not only be anachronistic, but would also compromise the accuracy, but I know of no standard translation (no matter how functional) that has taken this approach to Paul’s letters.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I have in mind here particularly Leland Ryken’s *The Word of God in English*—perhaps the single most counterproductive publication to come from Crossway after the publication of the ESV.

<sup>39</sup> The acrostic Psalms include Psalms 25, 37, 111, 112, 119, 145; see also the entire book of Lamentations.

<sup>40</sup> And a “taught” reader knows this only because he has been told that the epistolary genre includes certain features, not because he can figure them out for himself from the English translation.

<sup>41</sup> The NLT does take one step this direction in the Pauline epistles by beginning each of them, “This letter is from Paul...,” resulting in a form that is neither genre-accurate (i.e., no English or Greek letter begins this way!) nor textually based (it is neither a genitive construction nor does it contain the word *letter*/ἐπιστολή); it is inserting *culturally implicit* information. The (paraphrased) LB appends “Sincerely, Paul” to the letters, and Phillips appended “Paul” on a separate line at the end of each epistle, though the greeting is essentially formal. Not even Clarence Jordan’s idiosyncratic Cotton Patch Version makes the epistles into modern letters—though the closing does sometimes become, “Best wishes to you all, Paul.” The greeting maintains the formal structure: “From Paul, by God’s will ... to God’s fellowship in....” (This is not to say that other formal matters are not radically altered in the CPV, but this is not “mainstream” translation and should surely never serve as the representative of functional equivalent translation—as Robert Thomas takes it to be in *Evangelical Hermeneutics* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002], 89.)

### 3. Making implicit info explicit

When John explains the art of communication in relation to a text (84–85), I must confess to having struggled to understand his model. The problem is probably my own, but the picture of the world shared between writer and reader did not “click” for me until I read Anthony Nichols’ dissertation last week.<sup>42</sup> I *think* what John is saying here is that we must distinguish information which is *linguistically* implicit in the text from that which is *culturally* implicit due to the reader’s general knowledge of the world or from any non-textual sources. The problem arises from the fact that the reader’s general knowledge (or frame of reference) is, for the modern reader, quite different from the author’s. Thus a text which referred to a priest, for example, would typically, in a biblical context by biblically literate people, be understood in relation to the Levitical system (though other options exist in some cases). By contrast a modern biblically illiterate reader, whether in the primitive jungles of Papua New Guinea or on the streets of New York City, might more likely think first of some sort of religious functionary, whether Roman Catholic, Wiccan, or pagan. Some translations have sought to clarify this sort of reference to avoid misidentification.<sup>43</sup>

If I have understood John correctly, his objection is to the inclusion of any *culturally* implicit information in a translation. A translation must restrict itself to that which is *linguistically* implicit, and then only that which *must* should become explicit in the translation. [**Note from John’s rejoinder:** John would prefer to say that he *is reluctant* to include culturally implicit material.]

I agree in principle with what I think John is saying, but it is not always a clear cut distinction. This is in part because it is not possible to translate accurately with no previous knowledge of antecedent Scripture which forms the conceptual background of an author’s thinking as he writes. That cannot but affect our translation. We must consciously keep one eye on the biblical background as we translate—even as a reader must learn to do the same. I agree that a translation is not the place to include most of this information. I would suggest that culturally implicit information should typically go in notes rather than be reflected in the text itself. The HCSB has pioneered a new approach to this, at least in English translations by the use of “bullet notes” for key biblical terms (which are explained in an appended glossary) as well as a more extensive use of other brief comments in marginal notes.<sup>44</sup>

To offer one specific example, what is called the “divine passive” construction in the NT is a linguistic feature,<sup>45</sup> but our understanding of it is predicated on *cultural* practice (viz., the Jewish reticence to speak of God directly). Since English has a passive voice, the formal construction can be

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<sup>42</sup> Nichols, “Translating the Bible.”

<sup>43</sup> E.g., the GNB in Heb 9:25 reads “the Jewish high priest goes into the Most Holy Place every year...” (ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὰ ἅγια κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν...); note the addition of “Jewish.”

<sup>44</sup> I think that Holman’s bullet notes need some typographical refinement since the bullets used in the HCSB are too large. They often draw attention to themselves on a page—and that should not be the focus. But the concept is commendable. I would encourage the ESV team to consider something similar as they work on the 2d edition revisions, as well as including more numerous explanatory notes.

<sup>45</sup> E.g., Matt 5:4, παρακληθήσονται, “they will be comforted” = “God will comfort them.” This category can be overstated. See the discussion in Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 437–38 and the examples and bibliography cited there.

retained,<sup>46</sup> but in languages without a passive voice *culturally implicit information must* be added to make sense of the necessary active transform. Whom is to be supplied as the subject?!

#### 4. Examples, illustrations

John uses several examples from non-biblical material to illustrate the issues involved in translation. I would like to comment on two of those examples.

##### a. Blake

The example from the 18th C. British poet William Blake (86) is interesting. Interpreting Blake's poetry poses additional considerations in that he illustrated and printed his own books of poetry; Blake's own engravings are part of the composition and required for understanding Blake's intended meaning.<sup>47</sup> But I am not sure this is a good example since we are dealing with an *English* poem, not a translation issue—even though John speaks of allowing the reader “to listen in on the *English* poem”!<sup>48</sup> But even if Blake had written in French (or we were considering a French translation of Blake), I'm not sure that “listening in on the [French] poem” is helpful either. Is that an apt analogy for translation?

As part of his argument, John seeks to illustrate how the concreteness of past tenses in Blake's poem are part of the meaning, and then argues that we should leave those tenses alone rather than change them into present tenses or imperatives to make the meaning more clear (86). That is, even though the change might be pragmatically equivalent, they are not rhetorically equivalent. Of course to make this point, we would have to discuss it in terms of translation into another language—and since not all languages have a past tense, that might be more challenging. There is no dispute that we should leave Blake's past tenses as past tenses in English.<sup>49</sup>

##### b. Lewis

In arguing that a translation should show the reader the author's world rather than his own (the principle is, I think, a valid one), John provides an interesting illustration. He refers us to a translation of C. S. Lewis's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader* into modern Hebrew by Gideon Turi. His first example in this context is the translator's conversion of King Arthur imagery into King David imagery. I cannot assess

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<sup>46</sup> In English (and other languages that have a passive voice) I think the construction should be left in the passive without specifying the actor in the text. However a note would be very helpful and appropriate at such points so that the reader would understand the significance of the passive *which he could not otherwise understand from the translation alone*.

<sup>47</sup> The complete poem by Blake, “The Poison Tree,” can be found in the Lib/Congress copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (London, 1789, 1794), accessible at <http://tinyurl.com/fom9u> as part of the Blake Archive <http://www.blakearchive.org>.

<sup>48</sup> Ryken makes the same mistake, citing English writers (Wadsworth, Dickens, Lewis) and examples to prove a translation point (*The Word of God in English*, 131).

<sup>49</sup> What might also be disputed is John's interpretation of the poem. Although his argument regarding translation does not hinge on the correct interpretation of Blake, it is interesting that if one reads the entire poem (John cites only the first of four stanzas—perhaps all that was included in the book of quotations), one might reach a different conclusion regarding the significance of these past tenses. Since the poem concludes, “In the morning glad I see,/My foe outstretched beneath the tree.” Does Blake then, intend the poem as a warning regarding the consequences of growing wrath as John suggests? Is that consistent with the gladness expressed? Might this be something along the lines of a “victory psalm”?!

this example first hand since I do not have access to Turi's translation (and probably couldn't read it if I did!). From what John says, I would agree with him that this is, indeed, an undue functional translation—a failure to maintain adequate distantiation—though I must say that a Davidic reference might communicate better to a modern Israeli audience than an Arthurian one (indeed, I apparently don't know enough of Arthur to pick up John's point in the first chapter of Lewis in English dress, but I will assume he is correct). [Post-conf. note: I realized during John's oral presentation why I couldn't find this Arthurian allusion; he refers, not to *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, but to *Prince Caspian*.]

The second example cited from Turi's translation is not so evident. John argues that by choosing to translate Lewis's *lamb* in the final chapter with טָלֶה (*taleh*) rather than שֶׁה (*seh*) the translator obscures Lewis's allusion to Christ. This is because “the Hebrew New Testaments use *seh* for that [i.e., Christ as the sacrificial lamb].” By using טָלֶה the translator “does not allow the reader even to consider the reference” (87).

Such a charge, if legitimate, would be serious. I would make several observations. First, this is a somewhat more complicated picture than might at first appear. Some background data for starters: in the OT there are a number of words for *lamb*, not just two: שֶׁה and כֶּבֶשׂ are the most common.<sup>50</sup> In the NT there are four: ἀμνός, ἀρνίον, ἀρήν, and τό πάσχα. In neither testament is there a standard term for a sacrificial lamb.<sup>51</sup> In the Hebrew NT published by the Bible Society in Israel<sup>52</sup> (I have not checked others), it is true that שֶׁה is the standard term for *lamb* when referring to Jesus as the sacrificial lamb. The words טָלֶה, and כֶּבֶשׂ, though used (e.g., John 21:15 and Luke 10:3), do not refer to Jesus or to another sacrificial lamb. This uniformity, however, does not match the NT data which uses three different words for *lamb* in reference to Jesus (see n. 51). At least this Hebrew translation of the NT does not distinguish the variety of vocabulary actually used in the NT. If I were to be facetious, I might suggest that by standardizing the vocabulary they have obscured the NT vocabulary of Christological sacrifice! Indeed, the ESV has done the same thing since they have used only one English word, *lamb*, for three different Greek words! This is, of course, due to the fact that English has only one word choice available—but that only serves to make the point that it is difficult and not always desirable to attempt complete consistency in such matters.

But these considerations are technicalities. There is perhaps a much simpler reason why the translator selected טָלֶה rather than שֶׁה—and that is the fact that טָלֶה is the most common modern Hebrew word for lamb. The theological nuances that may have been present in Biblical Hebrew are often lost in modern Hebrew, especially in light of the fact that most speakers of modern Hebrew have

<sup>50</sup> The most common forms are שֶׁה (47×) and כֶּבֶשׂ (107× plus the metathesized form כֶּשֶׁב, 13×), but there are other words such as טָלֶה (3×), כֶּבֶשֶׂה (8×) and the metathesis form כֶּשֶׁבֶה (1×), and כֶּרֶם<sup>III</sup> (10× as “he lamb” + 2 metaphorical as battering ram). The word פֶּסַח can refer not only to Passover, but also to the sacrificial lamb offered at that festival (e.g., Exod 12:21). More general (“small cattle, sheep and/or goats, flocks”) is צֹאן (274×, though many uses are metaphorical). Some of these terms can have other variations such as combinations with בֶּן־ (“son of...”). There is also the Aramaic אֲמֵר (3×).

<sup>51</sup> In the OT reference can be made to a sacrificial lamb at least by טָלֶה (1 Sam 7:9), שֶׁה (Gen 22:7), פֶּסַח (Exod 12:21), or כֶּבֶשׂ (Exod 29:38). In the NT we read of Jesus as ὁ ἀμνός τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἀῖρων τὴν ἁμαρτίαν τοῦ κόσμου (John 1:29), as τὸ ἀρνίον τὸ ἐσφαγμένον (Rev 5:12), and as τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός (1 Cor 5:7). (The only word not used of a sacrificial lamb or of Jesus in the NT is ἀρήν.)

<sup>52</sup> *The Holy Scriptures: Hebrew and English* (Jerusalem: Bible Society in Israel, 1997).

very little awareness of biblical literature and vocabulary.<sup>53</sup> (This might depend also on the audience the translator intended: was this for a secular Israeli audience? a Messianic audience? etc.)

There is another consideration in regard to this illustration that is relevant to the matter of translation, and that is context. Even if we were to grant that the clearest way to maintain a consistent reference to Jesus as the sacrificial lamb (for those readers who might recognize the vocabulary) is by the use of *אֵז*, does that necessitate that using *טֹלֵה* would *disallow* the reader's consideration of a Christological reference?<sup>54</sup> That is hardly the case as the context of Lewis's story makes clear. The metaphor does not depend on a single word—the word *lamb* could be translated by any of the numerous Hebrew words for such an animal and readers would still realize that this passage was an allusion to Jesus—if they were biblically literate. Here is what Lewis says: “They ... saw that it was a Lamb. / ‘Come and have breakfast,’ said the Lamb in its sweet milky voice. / Then they noticed for the first time that there was a fire lit on the grass and fish roasting on it.”<sup>55</sup> Lewis is obviously mixing his metaphors here since he combines the portrait of Jesus as lamb with an allusion to the account of Jesus' post-resurrection ministry on the shores of Galilee to his faltering disciples (John 21:9). In that passage Jesus is never referred to as a lamb (it is believers who are lambs there). Regardless of the word used for lamb, the context would make the metaphor clear due to the redundancy in language.

### *Conclusion*

I would like to thank John for his paper. We need more like it which seriously grapple with the issues and with the text. Once again, I appreciate his willingness to entertain a respondent and anticipate learning from his rejoinder.

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<sup>53</sup> I am indebted to Colin Smith (Ph.D./Semitics, Cornell) for the information on modern Hebrew.

<sup>54</sup> John's argument was that by using *טֹלֵה* the translator “does not allow the reader even to consider the reference” (87).

<sup>55</sup> See the full text and its context in the Appendix.

### *Misc. observations*

The time allotted for the response did not permit these observations, but I include them for later consideration. They are in no particular order and are not as fully developed as those above. Some are merely passing notes or questions.

John begins his paper with a discussion of what “ordinary people” think of as translation—but his example is that of Krailsheimer—a language professor! And one who is a translator of Pascal and other French works into English. Granted, Krailsheimer may not be a professional translator or linguist, but “ordinary people” (at least in the US) rarely know more than one language. I am not sure this example really offers insight into “ordinary” conceptions of translation (or if it did, if that would be relevant). His second example comes from evaluating Latin translations—also well out of the range for “ordinary people.”

? How does this discussion relate to the doctrine of Scripture?

– perspicuity?

– inspiration? (I am glad that John has not linked formal equivalence with verbal inspiration as have some others. Ryken’s link of such is amateurish and indefensible; Grudem’s is more nuanced and informed, but not, IMHO, defensible either.<sup>56</sup> I have an article on the subject forthcoming in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*, fall 2006.)

p. 90, “local color” Are we expecting too much from a translation? i.e., more than it can legitimately be expected to do? Can a translation reflect the sort of “color” that John describes? Especially with his British examples, a translation that referred to the “shape of a football” in a language that had a different referent (such as American English) would be inaccurate translation. At that point we would, of necessity, have to employ a functional equivalent to maintain accuracy.

p. 83, Exod 20:17, the “ambiguity” here is not ambiguous. There is no question as to the wife being included in the final clause as a “possession.” John is right that this is clear from the remainder of the Law (see particularly the parallel text in Deut 5:21 with a different verb and different syntax), but nothing in Exod 20:17 requires the wife to be included as part of the referent of the last phrase. It is not a summary statement (“none of these things just listed”), but an *extension* of the list: “in addition to these things I’ve just listed, don’t covet anything else of your neighbor’s either.” Though this is not a major issue, it doesn’t serve well to illustrate the difference between formal and functional equivalents. (I don’t think the NLT has made a good choice here, but NIV is acceptable since “belongs to” isn’t restricted to ownership in English.<sup>57</sup>) Even the ESV is adequate—even though it uses a possessive suffix on neighbor! To pose this as an illustration of transparent ambiguity in contrast to functional translation fails to make the point.

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<sup>56</sup> Ryken, *The Word of God in English*; Wayne Grudem, “Are Only *Some* Words of Scripture Breathed out by God? Why Plenary Inspiration Favors ‘Essentially Literal’ Bible Translation,” paper presented at national ETS, San Antonio, Tex., 2004; later published in *Translating Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005), 19–56. See the response to this paper the following year by Mark Strauss, “Literal Bible Versions.” My critique of Ryken’s and Grudem’s position will appear in my forthcoming article in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* (prob. fall 2006 issue).

<sup>57</sup> “I belong to ETS” certainly does not imply that I am an owned possession of the organization.

## Appendix

C. S. Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

Ch. 16, "The Very End of the World"

The excerpt below appears near the end of the chapter; pp. 214–16 in the Collier/ Macmillan paperback edition of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952); pp. 369–70 of *The Complete Chronicles of Narnia* (HarperCollins, 1998).

But between them and the foot of the sky there was something so white on the green grass that even with their eagles' eyes they could hardly look at it. They came on and saw that it was a Lamb.

"Come and have breakfast," said the Lamb in its sweet milky voice.

Then they noticed for the first time that there was a fire lit on the grass and fish roasting on it. They sat down and ate the fish, hungry now for the first time for many days. And it was the most delicious food they had ever tasted.

"Please, Lamb," said Lucy, "is this the way to Aslan's country?"

"Not for you," said the Lamb. "For you the door into Aslan's country is from your own world."

"What!" said Edmund. "Is there a way into Aslan's country from our world too?"

"There is a way into my country from all the worlds," said the Lamb; but as he spoke, his snowy white flushed into tawny gold and his size changed and he was Aslan himself, towering above them and scattering light from his mane.

"Oh, Aslan," said Lucy. "Will you tell us how to get into your country from our world?"

"I shall be telling you all the time," said Aslan. "But I will not tell you how long or short the way will be; only that it lies across a river.

But do not fear that, for I am the great Bridge Builder. And now come; I will open the door in the sky and send you to your own land."

"Please, Aslan," said Lucy. "Before we go, will you tell us when we can come back to Narnia again? Please. And oh, do, do, do make it soon."

"Dearest," said Aslan very gently, "you and your brother will never come back to Narnia."

"Oh, Aslan!!" said Edmund and Lucy both together in despairing voices.

"You are too old, children," said Aslan, "and you must begin to come close to your own world now."

"It isn't Narnia, you know," sobbed Lucy. "It's *you*. We shan't meet you there. And how can we live, never meeting you?"

"But you shall meet me, dear one," said Aslan.

"Are—you there too, Sir?" said Edmund.

"I am," said Aslan. "But there I have another name. You must learn to know me by that name. This was the very reason why you were brought to Narnia, that by knowing me here for a little, you may know me better there."

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