

One can understand a language perfectly and yet be a poor translator. Students often ask: "Why should I spend months of intensive effort learning Greek and Hebrew? Can I expect to prepare a translation anywhere near as good as what has already been done by great scholars?"

The answer to this question is that the student cannot expect to prepare a translation anywhere near as good as the King James Version. But he can expect to learn from the original many things that were perfectly clear to the translators, but are extremely difficult to express in English. Every language has its own means of expression and these are difficult to carry over from one language to another. Words are not points but areas of meaning. One can know the exact meaning of a Hebrew word and yet find it necessary to use three different English words in translating it in different contexts, in order to bring out what it means for the English reader. Translation cannot be simply from word to word. It must be from idiom to idiom. Knowing the thought of the original is less than half of the job. Finding a way to come as near as possible to expressing precisely the same idea in one's own language is an even harder task.

William Tyndale showed remarkable ability in finding just the right English word or phrase to express an idea of the Greek and Hebrew original. As subsequent individuals and committees struggled with preparation of new translations each one of them was able to find a way at various points to get the idea of the original into clear and lucid English. When the committee began its labors on the King James Version they had before them many