

The Problem of Translation
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Since my own field of study is the Old Testament I hesitated to accept an invitation to write an article about translation for a book on understanding the New Testament. Yet a correct understanding of the New Testament requires considerable knowledge of the Old Testament as well. The interrelation of the two testaments is very great. The New Testament constantly quotes the Old Testament and builds arguments on Old Testament teachings. Its methods of expression are frequently influenced by its Old Testament background. In addition it may be said that the problems of translating the New Testament are in many ways similar to those of translating the Old Testament, though Hebrew is a language of very different type from our own, while Greek belongs to the same general group of languages as English.

If a person is familiar with only his native language he is apt to think of translation as a simple task. It may appear to him that all that is necessary is simply to take the words as they occur and substitute the corresponding word of the other language. Such an impression is quite contrary to fact. A word-for-word translation of one language into another is difficult if not impossible.

Word order differs greatly from language to language. In some languages it is very fluid; in some it follows laws that seem to have little relation to actual meaning.