

Politically Correct Translation

The New Revised Standard Version is advertised as a “politically correct” translation. In some respects we need not quarrel with non-sexist translations of the Bible. Hebrew and Greek had different words for men, human beings, and men (male human beings). Where Greek has *anthrōpos*, there should be no objection to translations like “human beings”, or “people”, instead of “men.” For example, the *NRSV* reads, In 1 Tim. 2:4, “who desires everyone to be saved” (*KJV* “who will have all men to be saved”). In Psalm 32:1 *NRSV* reads “those whose transgression is forgiven”, where the *KJV* reads, “he whose transgression is forgiven.” No one should object: to this.

We don't have to object to every change from what we have known. There is an interesting point in the Nicene Creed. The original Greek uses the word *anthrōpos*: “who for us human beings...” and a derivative of the same word for Jesus, “and became a human being.” There is an important parallel between the two. There is no room for a blasphemous denial that Jesus was male, anyhow. Even in the Creed there are other statements like “He rose again.”

However, Oxford University Press will publish a New Testament and Psalms next February in America (where else would it find a ready market?), a translation that is supposed to be “politically correct.” In its references to God, women, the Jews, the disabled, and minority groups, it tries to rid the Scriptures of “sexism” and “racism.” It is the “PC Bible.” It refers to God as “Father-Mother.”

Don't people fashion God in their own imagination when they refer to Him as Father-Mother? If Jesus taught anything at all about God it is that we should call Him “Father.” Jesus is no longer called “the Son of Man”, but “the Human One.” It even avoids the expression “God's right hand.” It says, “his-her mighty hand.” Instead of saying that the Jews killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, this translation just speaks of “those who” killed them. Instead of speaking of “the blind”, as a group with a disability, it reads, “those who are blind.” It even avoids metaphors of darkness as references to evil, for fear of offending people who have a dark skin. So 'What fellowship Is there between light and darkness?' reads as “What fellowship is there between day and night?”

Some people criticise Bible translations for the wrong reasons. Some, for example, have lamented that in an illustrated children's Bible, published in 1994 by Dorling Kindersley, angels are pictured without wings! Admittedly, the seraphim in Isaiah 6 had six wings. If angels are spirits, without bodies, do they have wings? Did Abraham see wings when the three angels came to him at Mamre (one the LORD)? It may surprise some to know that early Greek art, closer to New Testament times than we are, pictured angels as soldiers. They are members of the “heavenly hosts” (armies)! By the way, that is what “Zebaoth” means in Luther's hymn, “A mighty fortress”: “Of Sabaoth Lord” (verse 2). Jesus is the Lord of the heavenly armies, and the reference fits the martial mood of the hymn. In which the two short lines also have the drumbeat for marching soldiers.