

words must imply distinctly different objects, that the same word always has one and only one meaning in all contexts, and that the first occurrence of a word in the Bible governs its meaning throughout the rest of the Scriptures), the results of which force an artificial conformity and consistency upon the Scriptures. Fundamentally, such an attitude toward the Bible implies a complete failure to recognize the significance of the Scriptures as a series of messages addressed to people with different cultural backgrounds, facing diverse problems, and having varying needs. On the other hand, to treat the Scriptures in the light of their proper cultural context is to realize that the Bible is the Word of Life, for it comes out of the context of life and speaks about life to living men and women.

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## How Would You Do It?

Sometimes we have to resort to Rundi customs to get an idea across. Nahum 3:6 "I will cast abominable filth upon thee"—people here have no idea of pelting people with foul things (cf. rotten eggs, in England), but the greatest insult to anyone is to throw grass at him! He would mind being spat upon less! So we felt this was the right meaning here. We had an amusing time over Micah 6:9 "Hear ye the rod". It so happens that all five senses except seeing are expressed by the same word, context deciding whether hearing, feeling, smelling or tasting is intended. So naturally, with *rod*, the word would mean *feel*! Fortunately they have the expression 'Give ear to' which we were able to use here. It reminded me of Hebrews 6:5, "Tasted the good word of God", where the obvious meaning was 'heard'. There we had to use a word meaning to put food into the mouth.

*Rosemary Guillebaud.*

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## It May Not Be So Difficult

There are many passages in the Scriptures which seem at first sight to present insuperable difficulties to the translator, when, in reality, they may turn out to be amazingly easy. For example, in Mano, a language of Liberia, the expression in 1 Timothy 5:6 "...is dead even while he lives" presented no trouble at all, despite the fact that in many languages it seems to make no sense at all. In Mano, however, there is an idiomatic way of talking about just such a person, literally, "He is a dead body." Now this does not mean that the person is really dead, but that though he is alive he is as good as dead. What could be better for such a passage?