

arose among us the problem whether we should use "arimasu" (or "desu") style or "aru" style for our colloquial translation. The former is used almost exclusively in ordinary letters and conveys more politeness than the latter type which is ordinarily used for essays and scientific dissertations. But we finally adopted the latter style, mainly because we wished to retain solemnity and stylistic laconism and beauty, especially paying due consideration to the fact that they are extensively read in public worship. There may be contrary opinions in regard to this decision even among Japanese scholars, but for the time being this procedure seems to be inevitable. The last chapter of Romans may be translated using "arimasu" style, and possibly also the last two chapters of Hebrews where a more or less admonitory tone is prevalent. But this method of inducing stylistic varieties in Biblical translation has its own merits as well as demerits, often inviting us to fall into dangerous subjectivism and possibly false interpretation. It is quite natural that there should be a clear demarcation in principles and methods between a private translation, and a committee translation of the Bible such as the colloquial version.

TRANSLATION

At its best

Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtaine, that we may looke into the most Holy place; that remooueth the couer of the well, that we may come by the water.

(Preface to the King James Bible, A.D. 1611)

At its worst

If you really thought the original was like that, what can you have seen in it to make you think it was worth translating?

(Robert Bridges, "Ibant Obscuri".)