

The clearest case in point ought to be Mark 11.23, where Jesus exhorts his followers to “Have faith **in** God” (Ἔχετε πίστιν θεοῦ), but even here *Rheims* translated “Have faith **of** God”!

It would seem that what is needed most is a combination of consistency and common sense, two rules that are ever difficult for all translators to remember.

This review of these examples leads us therefore to conclude that Revelation 2.13 and 14.12 are *both* cases where we have an objective genitive, so that:

- (1) Revelation 2.13 should be translated “your faith/loyalty **in/to** me” and
- (2) Revelation 14.12 as “(their) faith/loyalty **in/to** Jesus”.

These suggestions are made not only for the sake of consistency and common-sense, but also in the interest of accuracy and communication of meaning.

## MORE ABOUT FAITH: SYNOPSIS OF A DISCUSSION BETWEEN DANIEL D. ARICHEA AND EUGENE BOTHA

A welcome development in recent years has been the increasing flow of comment from readers on articles published in both series of *The Bible Translator*. Sometimes, a simple article in *Practical Papers* stimulates some highly technical comment; sometimes, too, such comment is too long to publish in full. The editors have to keep a balance between new materials and the exploration of fresh themes. We ask for your understanding as we try to do this; and above all, we ask you to keep your comments flowing.

The series of articles on faith by Daniel D. Arichea, jr., published in *Practical Papers* as long ago as 1978-79, is a case in point. It has recently been subjected to careful analysis by Eugene Botha, a lecturer in the Department of New Testament, University of South Africa in Pretoria, on the basis of research into the lexicographical treatment of the meanings of *pisteuō* in the Greek New Testament. Mr Botha's comments in turn aroused a reaction from Dr Arichea, who felt that in many respects the disagreement between them was smaller than might at first appear. What follows is a selection from this discussion for which the editor is solely responsible, although both Dr Arichea and Mr Botha have had an opportunity of reading it before publication.

1. The discussion concerns, not the English words ‘believe’ and ‘faith’, but the Greek words *pisteuo* and *pistis*. This may seem to go without saying; but in fact it makes a difference. Almost always, the English word ‘faith’ is used in a religious or quasi-theological sense; but this is not necessarily so in other languages, or in English with the verb ‘believe’. This is true even in the Bible. ‘I did not believe the reports’, says the Queen of Sheba to Solomon, ‘until I came and my own eyes had seen it’ (2 Chr. 9.6 RSV). The meaning of a word is drawn largely from its context: in one sentence, the English word ‘believe’ may convey deep personal trust; in another, it may convey nothing more than an option. So in other

languages. In translation, we need to decide in each case how 'theological' are the overtones of such words as *pistis* and *pisteuō*.

2. Conversely, the context decides how much overlap of meaning there may be between, for example, the noun *pistis* and the verb *pisteuō*. The fact that grammatically, one is a noun and the other a verb does not of itself determine meaning. In semantic terms, one occurrence of *pistis* may denote an object: a set creed, 'the faith', accepted as true; while other occurrences, perhaps more common in the New Testament, denote events: the act of trusting or believing. The semantic components of a noun to form a different pattern than those of its related verb. But there is no guarantee, to say the least, that such a tendency in one language will be repeated in another. For translators, as always, the grammar is a means to the end; and the end is the meaning.

3. What is true of the individual words *pistis* and *pisteuō* is true also of the Greek expressions in which they are used. John, for example, uses *pisteuo* in at least four main ways: (1) *pisteuō* with a direct object, literally 'I believe X'; (2) *pisteuō hoti*, literally 'I believe that'; (3) *pisteuō eis*, literally 'I believe into'; and (4) *pisteuō en*, literally 'I believe in'. Now in English, there is a strong tendency for (4) 'I believe in' to convey the meaning of personal trust (though by extension it may be used with an impersonal object in such statements as: 'I believe in free speech'). (1) 'I believe' with a direct object tends in English to range between personal trust and acceptance of something as true—depending to a large extent on whether the object is personal, 'I believe you', or impersonal, 'He says he's 27, and I believe it.' (2) 'I believe that' tends in English to imply acceptance of a statement as correct, though 'I believe that' tends to be used of more important statements, and/or statements accepted with greater personal commitment, than, for example, 'I think that'; and it is difficult to see how 'I believe that Jesus is the Son of God' conveys any lesser faith than 'I believe in Jesus as the Son of God'. (3) 'I believe into' is simply not English.

The point of these examples is that this kind of exercise in semantic analysis (and often something more detailed) needs to be repeated for every language, including Greek. The statements which I, as a native speaker of English, made on the basis of my own intuition in the last paragraph need to be completely reconstructed for New Testament Greek—and unfortunately there are no living native speakers of New Testament Greek! We cannot assume, without careful analysis, that *pisteuo en* is equivalent in a given occurrence to 'I believe in'; or that *pisteuo en* is semantically distinguishable in a given occurrence from *pisteuo eis*, or even one of the other constructions.

4. The translator also needs to be aware of the possibility that a biblical term such as *pistis* may have senses or connotations which are not covered at all by the standard translation in his mother tongue. For example, *pistis* in Rom. 3.3 probably means 'trustworthiness', and in 1 Tim. 5.12 it may mean 'promise'; the related adjective '*pistos*', usually translated 'faithful', sometimes, as for example in Heb. 3.2,5, has the special connotation of satisfactory performance in a particular function or office.

5. Mr Botha offers the following list of lexical meanings of the words *pisteuō* and *pistis* themselves:

**Pisteuo**

- i. to accept something as correct or true.
- ii. to trust, rely on someone or something.
- iii. to have Christian faith, to believe in a Christian manner.
- iv. to entrust something to the care of someone.

**Pistis**

- i. what can be believed, or be accepted as true.
- ii. trust and reliance on . . .
- iii. trustworthiness, the state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed.
- iv. Christian faith.
- v. doctrine, beliefs, the content of what Christians believe.
- vi. promise, a promise or pledge of faithfulness and loyalty.

Some of these meanings are certainly more frequent than others; and the list may not be exhaustive. But in each case, it is the context which determines which of these possible meanings is to be chosen as a basis for translation; that is, as a basis for beginning the search for expressions in the receptor language which convey as far as possible the same semantic components.

One final comment. This discussion about *pistis* and *pisteuō* is of course particularly important for Bible translators, since it concerns what is sometimes called a 'key concept' in the New Testament, indeed in the Bible as a whole. The study has shown how misleading it can be to consider such 'key words' as monolithic entities, capable of being translated by a single expression in the receptor language. Yet the underlying principles involve universal features of language and of the relations between them. To this extent and in this sense, therefore, it is not only possible but necessary to translate the Bible like any other book.

P.E.