



To sum up...

Translators should have two things in front of them when they translate: the English text prepared by the comics committee and the picture frames from the particular comic. No translation of text should be done until the picture that goes with the text has been carefully scrutinized. Translation for the comic medium involves producing a text which will be quite different in form at many points from that which is already published in a normal printed version.

NOTES

Adoption in modern translations

The term *huiiothesia*, “adoption”, occurs in the Greek NT five times (Rom 8.15, 23; 9.4; Gal 4.5 and Eph 1.5). If it is accepted that Paul wrote Ephesians, then it is found only in Paul’s writings. It is a legal, technical term used as an image of what God does for those who commit themselves to him in faith. In Rom 9.4 it is applied to the OT community of faith, while in the other four cases NT believers are in view. In three of these four cases, it is seen as an accomplished fact, but in Rom 8.23 it is clearly a future hope.

The word is attested from the second century BC and bears the meaning “adoption as a child”. In ancient Greece adoption was often practiced in order to provide an heir where there were no natural male descendants, but

it was not limited to such cases. The adopted child became a part of the family and received all the rights and responsibilities of a child born into the family naturally.

The image of adoption highlights the fact that our relationship to God is not a natural right and can not be based on our work, but it is the result of his gracious act of making us his own. Human beings are normally compelled by society to accept as their own those who “become their children” through the natural process of conception and birth; but there is no compulsion to accept the offspring of others.

Paul saw this as one of many figures depicting our relationship to a gracious God. But the term has been undertranslated in GNB and NEB, and inconsistently handled in many other English versions. The table below demonstrates this inconsistency. (A plus sign /+/ indicates that the noun “adoption” or some form of the verb “adopt” has been used in translation; a minus /-/- appears where adoption terminology has not been used.)

	RSV	JB	NAB	AT	NIV	TNT	Phillips	LB
Rom 8.15	-	-	+	+	-	-	+	+
Rom 8.23	+			-	+	-	-	-
Rom 9.4	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-
Gal 4.5	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+
Eph 1.5	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+

Note that the idea has been completely omitted in Rom 8.23 in JB and NAB on textual grounds. Although the term is not found in a number of early manuscripts, the UBS Greek NT (3rd edition) gives it a C reading, which indicates a reasonable degree of certainty that *huiothesia* should be included in the text.

Possible objections to adoption terminology

In those modern versions that avoid the use of the noun “adoption” or the verb “adopt”, the translation is usually “to make...sons” or “to become sons” depending on the context. This rendering is inadequate because it omits any reference to the means whereby the “sonship” is accomplished, and it uses exclusively male terms unnecessarily.

There are two possible reasons for the failure to use adoption terminology in a common language translation like GNB: (a) it may be omitted on the ground that modern adoption is not equivalent to the first century practice with which Paul and his readers were familiar or (b) it may be excluded because in the judgment of the translators the word “adopt” does not represent common language.

The New Testament writer could have easily used less technical words equivalent to “make us his children”, “become children of God” (as in John 1.12) or “treat as sons” (see Hebrews 12.7), but he chose to use the legal term that was familiar to him and also to his readers. While the adoption practiced in the Graeco-Roman world may not have been identical

in every respect with what is done in Western cultures in the 20th century, there is no reason to believe that it was sufficiently different to merit the exclusion of such words in modern translation on the ground that the meaning is radically different. Adoption terminology should bring in the mind of the modern English reader essentially the same reaction as it did in the minds of the hearers and readers of the NT in the 1st century. This, after all, is the avowed objective of modern translators.

The only other possible objection to the use of adoption terminology might be the argument that it does not represent the “common language” at which translations like GNB are aiming. But if this were indeed the case one would not expect to find it in other popular translations like J.B. Phillips and the *Living Bible*. Yet in each of these versions the terms “adopt/ed” are found in three of the five instances (although not the **same** three!). And if “adopt” does not represent common language, then we would certainly not expect it to be found elsewhere in the GNB. But in fact it is found in the OT story of Pharaoh’s daughter taking Moses as her own son (Ex 2.10) and in the NT account of the same event (Ac 7.21). Likewise, it is used of Mordecai’s adoption of Esther (Esth 2.7, 15). The verb is also used in its broader sense of “adopting” the customs or practices of an alien group in six other places in the OT, but this is less significant to the argument here. In any case, adoption terminology has clearly not been rejected as being too high a level of English. Why, then, can it not be used to translate *huiiothesia* in the letters of the NT?

Proposals to restore the adoption image in the GNB

In view of the above demonstration that modern adoption is a valid image of the Christian’s relationship to God, and that the terminology can be (and is!) used in a common language translation, the following proposals are made not only as an improvement of the GNB, but also as a better model for those translators in other languages who make use of the GNB in their work.

To be sure, the contexts in which *huiiothesia* is used are different, and blind verbal consistency or formal correspondence is not recommended. But in these five cases it seems that the adoption terminology used by Paul, could also be translated into modern English in such a way as to have the same impact on today’s reader as the 1st century words had on the ancient reader.

Existing GNB rendering

Rom 8.15

For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead the Spirit makes you God’s children and by the Spirit’s power we cry out to God “Father! my Father!”

Proposal

For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead you have been adopted as God’s children and the Spirit enables us to cry out to him, “Father! my Father!”

Rom 8.23

But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait for God to make us his sons and set our whole being free.

But it is not just creation alone which groans; we who have the spirit as the first of God's gifts also groan within ourselves as we wait to be adopted as God's children and to be set completely free.

Rom 9.4

They are God's people; he made them his sons and revealed his glory to them;...

They are God's people; he adopted them as his own children and revealed his glory to them;...

Gal 4.5

...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might become God's sons.

...to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might be adopted into God's family.

Eph 1.5

God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his sons -

God had already decided that he would adopt us as his own children through Jesus Christ -

In languages where no technical word exists for adoption or where such terminology might be outside the realm of common language, the existing GNB rendering may be a satisfactory model; but the above proposals should provide a better model in those cases that are similar to English.

JOHN ELLINGTON

How many books of Esther are there?

We are all familiar with the fact that there are two versions of the book of Esther: a Hebrew version, accepted by most Protestant churches as the canonical one, and a longer one, a Greek version from the Septuagint, which the Catholic Church accepts as one of the deuterocanonical books. Bibles which only contain the common canon, give, of course, the Hebrew version of Esther. Bibles, such as the *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible* (TOB) in French, *The Good News Bible* in English, and *Di Gute Nachricht* in German, which include the deuterocanonical books (at least as an option in the case of the latter two), give the Hebrew Esther in the common canon, and the Greek Esther among the deuterocanonical books. In the TOB Greek Esther cursive print is used to mark those parts that are found in both the Greek and the Hebrew Esther, and there are footnotes to indicate where the Greek Esther differs from the Hebrew text.

This seems simple and straightforward. However, a special problem related to Esther cropped up recently with a team that was translating the