

However, if the text is allowed to remain without further information being given in this context, the result may be absurd. Jesus puts his hands over the man's eyes and then asks, "Can you see anything?" Of course not! Since it is physically impossible to see anything when the eyes are covered by another person's hands, logic demands that another bit of information be made clear: "Jesus removed his hands." While in some languages this may be left to the imagination of the reader, other languages may require that it be clearly stated. And translators should be careful to consider the logical implications of their translations after having taken care of those items that are formally implicit.

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### **"Salvation to our God"**

This is the literal, Authorised or King James Version, translation of the first words of the song sung in Rev 7.10 by the "great multitude, which no man can number", in praise of God and the Lamb. Similar language is used in two other songs of praise: in 12.10, literally "now has come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God", and 19.1, literally "the salvation and the glory and the power of our God".

Translators have to decide what this language means. Even translations which keep close to the form of the Greek feel the need to add a verb in 7.10 and 19.1. The most natural verb is "belong"; it is chosen in 7.10 by RSV and NIV, "salvation belongs to our God", and also by Phillips and the Italian common language translation (ItCL). "Belong" is also supplied by both traditional and modern translations in 19.1.

But what does it mean to say that salvation belongs to God? It makes sense, in 19.1, to say that glory and power belong to God—but salvation?

The principles of meaningful translation encourage us to replace abstract nouns by verbs. It so happens that Revelation never uses the verb for "save"; but "save" in English, and equivalent verbs in other languages, should help us see the meaning of "salvation" here. Clearly it makes no sense to speak of God being saved; the equivalent meaning should be "God saves". So GNB translates in 7.10 "Salvation comes from our God"; similarly the French and German common language Bibles (FrCL, GeCL).

The problem with this is that in 7.10, the Greek uses a dative case. This may mean "to" or "for" "our God", but not "from our God". The Greek of Revelation is often incorrect, it is true: but before we make it mean the opposite of its usual meaning, "from" instead of "to", we should try all other possible solutions. Strangely, in 19.1, where the Greek uses a genitive case, the meaning could be "salvation, glory and power come from our God"; but all the translations we have consulted prefer to think of these as qualities belonging to God. But once again, what does it mean to say "salvation belongs to our God"?

Arndt and Gingrich's standard *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* offers a first faint clue by calling this use of the word *sōtēria*, usually translated "salvation", "a Hebraism". It refers to the last verse of Ps 3 in Greek, which GNB translates "Victory comes from the LORD". This would explain Rev 19.1, since the genitive is used in both places, but not 7.10; and in any case, Arndt and Gingrich do not offer a translation.

More help is found in the article by W. Foerster on *sōtēria* in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (volume 7, pages 997–8). This first confirms that "salvation" in Revelation is always a quality of God himself. It continues: "In all the passages *sōtēria* has the familiar OT nuance . . . of 'victory' ", as in Ps 3.8 GNB just quoted; Ex 15.2; Dt 33.29; Ps 74.12, and many other texts. NEB and JB have the courage to translate *sōtēria* consistently in this way in Revelation: in 7.10, NEB has "Victory to our God . . .", in 12.10, "This is the hour of victory for our God . . ."; and in 19.1, "Victory and glory and power belong to our God . . ." GeCL does this in 12.10: "Our God has conquered."

But "salvation" is a precious word, and we are naturally sorry to let it go without a struggle. Is not something lost if we translate *sōtēria* in Revelation by "victory"? On the contrary, we replace a literal translation which, especially in 7.10, is difficult to understand, by one which suits the context better in all three places. GeCL shows this particularly clearly in 12.10:

Our God has conquered!  
Now he has shown his might,  
And entered on his reign!

The whole passage is about God's victory in the "war in heaven" (12.7), and the victory of God's people (12.11); any reference to salvation is indirect. In chapter 7, "victory" in verse 10 is seen as something which belongs to God, like "honour, power, and might" (GNB) in verse 12. And the whole of 18.1–19.4 is about God's victory over Babylon, the great prostitute.

It therefore seems a pity that other common language translations do not follow the example of NEB, JB, and GeCL in Rev 12.10, in translating *sōtēria* as "victory" in all three texts of Revelation.

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