

In some countries the story of the father giving a calf for his son's feast might be open to misunderstanding. In one East African tribe, for instance, it would be considered an insult for a father to present his son with a calf for a feast. A good translation would need to take into account any problem with values or feelings associated with the giving of a calf. One way around the problem would be to translate so as to show that this was a good custom among the Jews, even though it may seem odd to the African reader. It may also be possible to consider replacing "calf" by some other animal which would better carry the right feelings for the father's action in the readers' own situation. (For instance in one selection in the Fijian Hindi language the word "goat" has been used—most Indians in Fiji, including many Christians, consider it wrong to eat beef.)

Verse 27. In some languages the reply of the servant to the older brother may sound disrespectful, unless it includes the proper term of address which a servant would use when speaking to a person of higher status. In the modern Fijian NT, for example, the term *saka* which means "sir" has been used. Another way to deal with this problem would be to put the servant's reply into indirect speech: "The servant replied saying that . . ."

RAYMOND R. RICKARDS

Give us this day our . . . bread (Matthew 6.11)

The Lord's Prayer is one of the parts of the Bible that needs to be translated early in the life of any Christian community. Because of its use in public worship and private devotion the form in which it is first translated acquires a kind of sanctity; and changes and revisions are often resisted by Christian groups. At the same time, because this prayer is so important we must work for an adequate translation based on a satisfactory understanding and interpretation of it.

There are various problems of text and interpretation in this prayer, but this short note is concerned only with the translation of one of the requests in it, and in particular with the way the Greek word *epiousios* (translated "daily" in KJV, RSV and many of the other English versions) is to be understood.

The difficulty of understanding this word can be seen in the variety of translations suggested:

- our bread for the morrow (Moffatt, RSV margin, NEB margin)
- the food we need (GNB, Phillips)
- the food for today/tomorrow (GNB margin)
- necessary for subsistence (Jerusalem Bible)
- our bread for the coming day (Barclay)

Based on various possible derivations, the Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, edited by Arndt and Gingrich, gives the following possible meanings:

1. necessary for existence (as in GNB "the food we need");
2. for the current day, for today;
3. for the following day;

4. a. bread for the future;
- b. the bread that comes to this day or belongs to this day;
- c. for the next day;
- d. bread of the coming Kingdom and its feast;

This variety is represented also in the ancient versions. Jerome (who died in 420) says that he found the expression “the bread for the morrow” in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*. The Translator’s Handbook on Luke advises that “in the light of the diversity of opinion the traditional rendering ‘daily’ is to be recommended.”

This appears to be a situation where what the translator chooses will depend not primarily on grammar and dictionary but on his understanding of the general sense of the prayer and how this clause fits in with the rest.

The position taken by those who translate *epiousios* by “daily”, and by a large number of modern commentators, is that the prayer is for our normal, ordinary, physical needs. A. B. Bruce in the *Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Matthew 6.11) may be considered typical of this position: “Whatever the adjective may mean, it may be taken for granted that it is ordinary bread, food for the body, that is intended. All spiritualising, mystical meanings of *epiousios* are to be discarded.”

Along the same lines, “the bread for tomorrow” is understood to mean the necessities for the following twenty-four hours. It has been suggested that the use of a word, whose meaning is taken as “belonging to tomorrow”, or “belonging to today” was determined by the liturgical use of this prayer. However to suggest that in the morning it means “the bread for today” and in the evening, “the bread for tomorrow” seems to reflect a legalism that is not characteristic of Jesus and the Gospels. (See Principal Chase, *The Lord’s Prayer in the Early Church*, quoted by Bruce in the *Expositor’s Greek Testament*.)

Professor Jeremias has argued that the form of the Lord’s Prayer in the *Aramaic Gospel; according to the Hebrews*, to which Jerome refers, represents a continuing tradition of the prayer as Jesus taught it and not a translation from the Greek. The word for “tomorrow” in the prayer (*mahar*), according to Professor Jeremias, meant not only the next day, but also “the great tomorrow”, the messianic age, the final summing up of all things. If this is the meaning behind the rare Greek word, the petition would then be close in meaning to the rest of the prayer which keeps God’s total purpose in focus.

It is sometimes argued that this clause and this clause alone in the Lord’s Prayer refers to our ordinary daily needs. This could be a misunderstanding. We do not have, in the Lord’s Prayer, five parts referring to the “great things” of God and one referring to our requirements. A more adequate understanding of the prayer would be to take all the clauses as involving God’s ultimate purpose and our daily life in their range of meaning. The first three parts call down God’s purpose and the last three offer up ourselves for the same purpose.

Over against the position represented by Bruce above, Jeremias states: “It would be a gross misunderstanding if one were to suppose that here there is a ‘spiritualising’ after the manner of Greek philosophy, and that there is a distinction made between ‘earthly’ and ‘heavenly’ bread. For Jesus earthly bread and the bread of life are not antithetical. In the realm of God’s kingship he viewed

all earthly things as hallowed . . . It is in this sense too that the petition about 'bread for tomorrow' is intended . . . It asks that amid the secularity of everyday life the powers and gifts of God's coming age may be active in all that Jesus' disciples do in word and deed. One can flatly say that this petition for the bread of life makes entreaty for the hallowing of everyday life." *The Prayers of Jesus*, pages 101–102).

If this position is accepted, the translator faces the problem of expressing this thought in his own language in such a way that the rendering does not exclude either the ordinary food or the food that prepares us for the Messianic feast and is a foretaste of it. In English "bread for the day" (with the possibility of understanding it as *the day*) will allow an interpretation which points to the messianic age without excluding the meaning of daily bread. Even "the bread we need" (GNB) can be interpreted this way, but "daily bread" cannot.

MATHEW P. JOHN

HOW WAS THAT?

A missionary translator in Latin America translating 2 Timothy 4.13 was having trouble in finding a suitable equivalent for the "parchments" which Paul was asking Timothy to bring him. Eventually he used what seemed to be a perfectly natural borrowing from Spanish, *epistolas* or "letters". What he did not realize was that the word *epistolas* looked very much like the Spanish word *pistolas* "pistols", and this other Spanish word was very much better known in that part of the world. What was more, the people could not understand why Paul would want letters sent to him in jail, but they could well understand that he would be able to use pistols. So the wrong meaning came through.

French-speaking readers will be glad to know of the publication of Jean-Claude Margot: *Traduire sans trahir. La théorie de la traduction et son application aux textes bibliques*. Lausanne: Éditions l'Âge d'Homme 1979. 389 pages, no price stated.