

own standards of good work. Others may need a lot of encouragement simply to make a start and to apply the methods of compilation which will ensure that the glossary is a useful complement to the translation.

Time is also needed for looking over the glossary in relation to the footnotes, to ensure that comments are logical and well located. If “mustard-seed” is explained in a footnote (probably once in each of the Gospels in which it occurs), it does not need a glossary note as well, and so on. This kind of cross-checking and comparison can, in fact, achieve a great deal in terms of harmonizing essential features within the translation text, and between the text and these major additional features, as well as being a fascinating exercise in itself.

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TRANSLATING *NOMOS* “LAW” IN ROMANS IN SIMPLIFIED INDONESIAN

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Paul uses the word *nomos* frequently in his letters, using it with various meanings, especially in his letter to the Romans. Although the term *nomos* may have different meanings according to the context within which it is used, it is usually just translated by “law” or “the law” in English translations, and by equivalent terms in other languages.

It is interesting to note that Paul always uses the term *nomos* in the singular. In this he reflects Septuagint usage of the term, where in most instances it is also used in the singular. Commentators feel that this means Paul views *nomos* as a single entity, rather than as a series of commands. Paul used *nomos* both with the definite article, *ho nomos*, and without it. In the past scholars have argued that there might be a difference of meaning when it is used with and without the article: Origen and others after him have suggested that with the article the term would refer to the Law of Moses, and that without the article it would refer to law in general. However, most scholars today do not feel that the presence or absence of the article would mark such a distinction in meaning.

The Greek-English Lexicon of Louw and Nida gives the meaning of *nomos* as: “a formalized rule (or set of rules) prescribing what people must do—‘law, ordinance, rule’.”

Paul indeed often uses *nomos* to refer to the commands of the Law of Moses that people have to do. However he also uses it with other meanings in different contexts. Dr D.J. Moo, in his article on “Law, Works of the Law, and Legalism in Paul,” has drawn up a helpful chart to mark the different meanings of *nomos*. Paul’s use of *nomos* basically falls into two categories: in the first one it has the meaning of a demand or body of demands (usually with sanctions), and in the second one it has non-legal uses.

When it is used with the meaning of “demand”, *nomos* can refer to either a general or divine demand. Divine demands can further be divided into three subcategories:

1. general; the basic demand,
2. in its Mosaic form (this would be its most frequent use),
3. in its New Testament form (*ennomos Christou*).

In its Mosaic form, *nomos* can refer to: a) a single command (where it would be interchangeable to some extent with *entole*, “commandment”), b) a body of commands, c) a system or order (interchangeable with *diatheke*, “covenant”), or d) legalism. For its non-legal uses, *nomos* can either refer to the Jewish canon of Scripture, or it can have the meaning of “principle”, “force”, “authority”.

When Paul uses the term to refer to the Scriptures, he uses it in much the same sense as the rabbis do when they speak about the Torah:

1. It is the whole canon of the Old Testament, as an expression of God’s will, serving as a standard of righteous living for his people.
2. It also can refer to the Pentateuch, which holds the statutes of the Law.
3. It is the Law of Moses, with the Decalogue as its basic code.

Paul uses *nomos* most often of the Mosaic law, and it is in this sense that he discusses the relation between the Law and justification (GNB “putting people right”) in his letter to the Romans. However, as has been pointed out above, he also uses it with different meanings which may lead to a play on words or to ambiguity if the different meanings occur in the same sentence.

***Nomos* is not easy to translate meaningfully**

It is possible that there are some languages in which a rather literal approach to translation of the term will not pose any great problems for experienced readers. However, if the translation is based upon principles of functional equivalence then often the meaning of the term has to be brought out clearly for the intended audience to avoid any misunderstandings. To translate the different usages of the term in such a way that the meaning becomes clear, however, is not an easy task for the translator. In several instances, the meaning of the term as used by Paul in Romans is ambiguous, and it is difficult to determine which meaning is intended. To complicate matters, in a few instances Paul may have intended to be ambiguous, or at least did not mind sounding ambiguous to his readers. Though the translation itself would pose no problem—since it would also have to be ambiguous so that the translation itself could be straightforward—to determine in which places Paul chose to be ambiguous would be far from easy.

The New Indonesian Bible Translation (*Terjemahan Baru*) has translated *nomos* by *Hukum Taurat* (Torah Law) quite consistently, irrespective of context. The GNB makes a distinction between “Law”

and “law”, but generally does not go any further than that. The Indonesian Common Language translation renders the term variously as *hukum* (“law”), *hukum Musa* (“Mosaic Law”), and *hukum agama Yahudi* (“Jewish religious laws”) according to context. It has not made any attempt to distinguish between ambiguous and unambiguous usage.

To translate *nomos* in a meaningful way requires careful analysis of the term in each context, especially if the translation is intended for readers with little or no knowledge of Biblical terminology.

Translation of this term has proved to be especially difficult in the Simplified Indonesian translation project which is currently going on. This project aims to translate for Indonesians with limited formal education and also limited knowledge of the Indonesian language, which often is a second language for them. In addition, this audience has little or no knowledge of biblical culture and little understanding of biblical terms. For this audience even the Common Language Indonesian Bible (*Alkitab Bahasa Indonesia Sehari-hari*) first published in 1985 proved to be still too difficult. To make the biblical text intelligible for this type of audience, extensive restructuring of the text has been found to be necessary. This includes building in redundancy to a greater extent than would be necessary for a Common Language translation, and avoiding biblical terminology where possible. In fact the text of the Indonesian Children’s Bible is being prepared for this audience, with Scripture passages which previously had not been selected for inclusion now being brought in. The text itself is not yet in its final form, and revisions to it are still being made.

Translation of passages which contain *nomos*

In this article I want to discuss the best possible way to translate *nomos* for this type of audience. In the section which follows, I will examine the meaning of *nomos* in some passages in Romans, to determine the best possible way of translating it meaningfully for the above-mentioned readers, and give the proposed translation of the Simplified Indonesian text.

Romans 2.12 “The Gentiles do not have the Law of Moses; they sin and are lost apart from the Law” (GNB)

It is particularly difficult to identify the different meanings of *nomos* in the second chapter of Romans. However in this verse, in which *nomos* occurs for the first time in Romans, it is generally accepted that *nomos* refers to the Law of Moses (despite the absence of the article in the Greek). So also does the adverb *anomos* (“without law”), which occurs twice in the first part of the verse.

The Simplified Indonesian text attempts to render the first part of this verse as: “The non-Jews do not know God’s Law given through Moses” (*hukum Allah yang diberi melalui Musa*).

Romans 2.13 “For it is not by hearing the Law that people are put right with God, but by doing what the Law commands.” (GNB)

Nomos in the first part of the verse evidently refers to the Law of Moses, but in the second part it may have another meaning. Cranfield notes

that “though Paul takes up a Rabbinic doctrine (about doing the Law), he is giving it fresh content... (It is) that beginning of grateful obedience to be found in those who believe in Christ.”

The Simplified Indonesian proposes to translate this as: “For God makes people his friends not because they know what the Law requires, but because they do his will.”

Romans 2.14 “The Gentiles do not have the Law; but whenever they do by instinct what the Law commands, they are their own law, even though they do not have the Law.” (GNB)

Of the four occurrences of *nomos* in this verse, the first and the fourth refer to the Law of Moses, and the second occurrence refers to God’s will (assuming that Paul is referring to Christian Gentiles). The third occurrence refers to a general set of rules. So the proposed translation of the Simplified Indonesian text is: “The non-Jews do not know the Law of Moses, but if by their own free will they do the will of God, they show that they know what they may do and may not do...”

Romans 2.15 “Their conduct shows that what the Law commands is written in their hearts...” (GNB)

“What the Law commands” is literally “the work (collective singular) of the law”, which has also been taken to mean “the effect of the law”, and “actions performed in obedience to the law”. The proposed translation of the Simplified Indonesian text is: “They prove with their actions that they obey the Law, which is as it were written in their hearts.”

Romans 2.25-26 “²⁵ If you obey the Law, your circumcision is of value; but if you disobey the Law, you might as well never have been circumcised. ²⁶ If the Gentile, who is not circumcised, obeys the commands of the Law, will not God regard him as though he were circumcised?” (GNB)

In this passage, Paul is addressing the Jews (2.17), and “Law” in verse 25 clearly refers to the Law of Moses. In verse 26, however, *nomos* can be taken to refer to God’s will. It is the Gentile Christian (see comments on 2.14) who “obeys the commands of the Law” (literally, “keeps the requirements of the Law”), that is, he trusts God and obeys his will.

Romans 2.27 “And so you Jews will be condemned by the Gentiles because you break the Law..., but they obey the Law...” (GNB)

Here is one of the instances where it seems *nomos* is used in an ambiguous sense by Paul. He might of course be referring to the Law of Moses, but in the context he may also have the will of God in mind, which, he says, the Gentiles obey.

The Simplified text proposes to render this as: “...because you do not obey God’s will.”

Romans 3.19 “Now we know that everything in the Law applies to those who live under the Law...” (GNB)

The first occurrence of *nomos* refers to Scripture, and since Paul has

just quoted from Psalms and Isaiah, these books too would be part of the Law in this context. The Simplified Indonesian text translates the term here as “the Scriptures of the Jews”. The phrase “those who live under the Law” (literally “in the law”) is translated as “those who are under the rule of the Law of Moses.”

Romans 3.20 “For no one is put right in God’s sight by doing what the Law requires...” (GNB)

The phrase “doing what the Law requires” (literally “works of law”) has been taken here in a legalistic sense, and the Simplified text translates the first part of verse 20 as: “For no one becomes God’s friend by strictly and literally observing the religious laws.”

Romans 3.22 “...though the Law of Moses and the prophets gave their witness to it.” (GNB)

The reference here is clearly to the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Simplified text translates this as: “Moses and the prophets wrote about this in their holy books.”

Romans 3.27 “Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith.” (NRSV)

The “law of works” and “law of faith”, translated respectively by “we obey the law” and “we believe” in GNB, here can be taken to refer to a principle. The Translator’s New Testament, for example, renders the phrase “by what law?” as “on what principle?” and “by the law of faith” as “on the principle that it is faith alone that matters.”

The Simplified Indonesian text translates this verse: “Now it becomes clear that we have no reason for boasting. Why? Because we obey religious laws? No, because we believe in Jesus.”

Romans 3.31 “Does this mean that by this faith we do away with the Law? No, not at all; instead, we uphold the Law.” (GNB)

Nomos in both instances is best taken as referring to the Old Testament Scriptures, as in verse 19; and therefore the proposed translation in the Simplified version is: “Does this mean that we do away with the books of the Old Testament because we believe in Jesus? No, of course not. It is precisely because we believe in Jesus that we respect these holy books.”

Romans chapters 4 and 5

In these chapters *nomos* is taken as a reference either to law in general or to the Law of Moses. The Simplified text translates the term in these chapters just as *hukum* (“law”) or *hukum agama Yahudi* (“laws of the Jewish religion”).

Romans 6.14-15 “¹⁴ Sin must not be your master; for you do not live under law but under God’s grace. ¹⁵ What, then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under God’s grace?” (GNB)

The phrase “under law” is set here in contrast or opposition to “under grace”. It describes the situation of bondage and powerlessness in which people find themselves outside Christ under the Mosaic order. Therefore

the phrase “under law” refers to the Mosaic order which marked the era of death. The contrasting “under grace” refers to the new covenant and the era of life brought by Christ.

The proposed translation of the Simplified Indonesian text is: “Do not allow sin to control you, because you no longer live under the power of the Law of Moses, but under the power of God’s love...”

Romans 7.4 “As far as the Law is concerned, you also have died because you are part of the body of Christ.” (GNB)

In some instances in this chapter the use of *nomos* is ambiguous, and it could refer either to the Law of Moses or to the Mosaic order. The Simplified Indonesian proposed translation for this verse is: “It is as if you have died to the Law of Moses, which means you have been freed from its power over you. For you have become one with the body of Christ.”

Romans 7.21 “So I find that this law is at work: when I want to do what is good, what is evil is the only choice I have.” (GNB)

The meaning of *nomos* here is “principle”; in verse 23 also it has the meaning of principle or power. The Dutch GNB (*Groot Nieuws Bijbel*) translates law in verse 21 as *regel* (“rule”), and The Translators New Testament translates it as “principle”. The Simplified Indonesian text has: “So all this makes me understand that this is what is happening within me...”

Romans 8.2 “For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death.” (GNB)

Here, too, the meaning of *nomos* is “principle” or “power”. The Translators New Testament translates *nomos* here as “principle”: “For the principle of spiritual life in Christ Jesus has liberated me from the principle of sin and death.” The Dutch GNB translates *nomos* with *macht* (“power”). The Simplified Indonesian has: “Because God’s Spirit controls us we live with Christ Jesus. We have been freed, so that sin and death no longer can control us.”

Romans 9.31 “While God’s people, who were seeking a law that would put them right with God, did not find it.” (GNB)

“A law that would put them right with God”, is literally “a law of righteousness”. In this verse the Simplified Indonesian text translates *nomos* just by *hukum* (“law”): “The Jews were seeking for a law that would make God accept them as his friends. But they did not succeed.”

Romans 10.4 “For Christ has brought the Law to an end.” (GNB)

Here the Simplified Indonesian text translates *nomos* as *hukum agama* or “(Jewish) religious laws”, and the verse has been translated: “In God’s way, religious laws are no longer needed, because there is Christ.”

Romans 13.10 “If you love someone, you will never do him wrong; to love, then, is to obey the whole Law.” (GNB)

Nomos is here translated in Simplified Indonesian as “ordinances of God’s law”: “So he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled all the ordinances of God’s law.”

Conclusion

To translate the term *nomos* meaningfully in Simplified Indonesian, the meaning of the term has to be brought out as clearly as possible for the target audience. This means that it sometimes has to be translated as *hukum* (“law”), *hukum Musa* (“law of Moses”), *hukum agama Yahudi* (“laws of the Jewish religion”), *Alkitab* or *kitab-kitab Musa* (“Bible” or “books of Moses”), *kehendak Allah* (“God’s will”), *kuasa* (“power”), or by a descriptive phrase. Occasionally it may be left untranslated, as its meaning will be understood from other elements in the translated text. If in a few instances the translator feels that Paul meant to be ambiguous, than the term can just be translated as *hukum*.

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TRANSLATING “SERVANT” WORDS INTO RUNYORO-RUTOORO

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In Greek, Roman, and Hebrew societies, before and during New Testament times, slavery was accepted as a normal institution in society. There were social and legal provisions and practices which governed the relationships between masters and slaves and between slaves and the society at large, with details of duties and obligations.

Slavery had been quite beneficial to the stability and smooth running of many Greek and Roman households. Slavery was also tolerated in Jewish society, and there was hardly any effort to put an end to it as a social disgrace. Even the early Christian Church was not primarily concerned with attacking an entrenched economic, social, and political institution such as slavery.

The translation of terms in the Bible that arose out of this background of slavery have often presented problems. In the Runyoro-Rutooro translations there is a degree of consistency which is questionable in the rendering of the Greek term *doulos* “slave” and other terms related to it.

Slavery and serving in Bunyoro and Tooro society

This leads us to observe the variable nature of the customs of slavery and serving in Bunyoro and Tooro society in Uganda. The view of society as made up of *abahuma* and *abairu* (similar to the old European nobles and serfs) was often the background of these customs. The *bahuma* were mainly pastoralists, while the *bairu* were mainly peasants who lived by farming the land. According to mythology, Kahuma was the ancestor of