

Many of the modern popular language translations are making the adjustments necessary to make Biblical names fit the sound patterns of African languages. In the table that follows some of the better kind of adjustments made in some of these translations are given.

<i>English</i>	<i>Chishona</i>	<i>Chitonga</i>	<i>Chichewa</i>
Ephraim	Efraimi	Efulemu	Efraimu
Ephrath	Efrati	Efulata/i	Efrati
Joshua	Joshua	Josyuwa	Yoswa
Beer-sheba	Beeri-sheba	Bdiiyayaba	Beereseba
Abel	Aberi	Abela	Abele
Aiah	Aja	Aya	Aia
Abigail	Abigairi	Abbigelo	Abigaiyeli
Abinoam	Abinoami	Abinoyamu	Abinoamu
Aharhel	Ahareri	Ahaheli	Ahareli
Aiath	Aiati	Ayati	Aiati
Conaniah	Konania	Konaniya	Konaniya
Abiezer	Abiezeri	Abiezeza	Abiezero
Cyrene	Kurini	Sailini	Kurene
Deuel	Deueri	Dyuweli	Deyueli
Gershom	Gereshomi	Gesyomu	Gerisomu
Hymenaeus	Himenio	Haimenyusi	Humenayo
Jahzeel	Jazeeri	Jazela	Yazeli
Joiada	Joyada	Johoiada	Yoyada
Zeruiah	Zeruya	Zeluliya	Zeruya

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PUNCTUATION

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When we write something in any language, we have certain rules for writing or spelling the words of the language. When we want to put these words together in sentences, we will usually have to put other marks on the page as well, to help the reader know how the words fit together. These other marks, which include things like commas and periods (or full stops), are what we mean by punctuation. In order to write correctly, we need to know the rules for writing words (this is called the spelling system, or the orthography) and we also need to know the rules for punctuation.

Since parts of the Bible are among the first books printed in many languages, the people who do the Bible translation may have to work out the spelling system for the language. While they are working this out, it is important for them to also think about what punctuation should be used in the language. This article is intended to help people to make decisions about punctuation. The comments made here are intended for languages which use the kinds of letters used by English, French, Spanish, and many other languages (often called Roman letters). These comments may also be useful for people working with other alphabets, but nothing more will be said about them.

Many of the world's languages now have spelling systems which have been in use for a long time. Each of these languages probably also has a widely accepted form of punctuation, and Bible translators will of course use these accepted rules in their own work. Two points should be made about this. First, the system of every major language is different in some way from every other major language. This means that there is no problem if it seems best to introduce a system which is different in certain ways from other systems which the translator knows. A translator should not assume that he needs to use colons just because English does, for example. The second point is that even in languages with well established punctuation rules, translators may still have decisions to make. In certain situations, more than one rule may apply. For example, certain punctuation marks might be used only in very literary language. In that case, translators might decide never to use them in a common language Bible translation.

Translators most likely to be interested in punctuation will be working in languages which have only been written recently, and which do not have any well established system yet. Usually these languages are spoken in countries or areas where there is another language being widely used, which does have a well established system of punctuation. This may be the national language of the country (such as Spanish, in many countries of South and Central America) or it may be an international language like English or French which is used in education. In this article I will refer to this other language as the national language, even though it may not be the official national language in every case.

A translator who is preparing a spelling system and a punctuation system for his language should be aware of two basic principles which he should follow. Unfortunately, the two principles often contradict each other. The first principle is that **you should not introduce punctuation marks which are not needed in the language**. For example, many languages have special words or particles which clearly show where a quotation begins and ends. The sentence might begin with "Paul said" and then end with words like "he said". In such languages, it is quite unnecessary to use quotation marks (inverted commas). In some languages, all questions may be clearly marked by the words used, and there may be no need for question marks in the punctuation system.

The second principle is that **in order to get people to accept the punctuation system, you may have to make it look like the punctuation used in languages they are already familiar with**. Spanish, for example, marks questions with question marks at the beginning and the end of a sentence. Those of use who use English may feel that this is unnecessary, and we might want to use one only at the end. But if the speakers of the language are used to seeing Spanish, they may insist on using the two question marks. Or, if we look again at the languages already mentioned, which do not need to use quotation marks, we may still decide to use them because the people feel that a proper writing system should have them.

This shows why these two basic principles may often disagree with each other. If we look only at what the language needs **in theory**, one answer may seem right. But if we want the punctuation to be accepted **in practice**, a different answer may be necessary. When people have strong feelings about something,

it is usually wise to do what they want, even if it does not seem theoretically the best thing. In addition, there is another advantage of having the writing system of smaller languages fairly close to the system of national languages. This will help people who learn to read one to also learn to read the other without too much confusion. However, this applies mainly to the most common features of the punctuation system. People are not likely to be worried if some punctuation marks which are not used often in the national language are never used in their own language.

Now that we have discussed the general principles, it may be useful to look at the various types of punctuation one by one.

Capital letters

In English, capital letters are used for the first letter of the names of people and places and of days and months. Other languages use capitals slightly differently. German is the most different, since all nouns are capitalized in that language. Since names are capitalized in all major languages which use the Roman alphabet, it is probably wise to follow this practice in other languages, too. This does have one small advantage in Bible translation. Sometimes names have meaning, and capitals make it clearer to the reader that the words are being used as names rather than in their usual sense. For example, in Acts 28.15 there is a town named Three Inns; and in Hosea 1.6-9 the prophet has two children named Unloved and Not-My-People. Of course, many people hear the Bible read to them and do not read it themselves, so it is still good to try to show in the wording of the text itself that these are names. But capitals help to make this clear.

The second main use of capitals is at the beginning of sentences. Sentences are marked by capitals at the beginning and periods (full stops) at the end. Since one of these would be enough to make a sentence, it would theoretically be possible to use only the period, and not to use capitals. But this custom is so common that it is probably best for all languages using the Roman alphabet to follow it.

The other types of punctuation can all be called punctuation marks.

Period or full stop (.)

The period or full stop is used in a number of ways. Some of the more important are mentioned here.

1. At the end of a sentence.
2. After numbers in a list (as in this list).
3. To separate the chapter from the verse number in a reference to a Bible passage, as Mark 5.17 (but there are other reference systems which do not use periods for this purpose).
4. To make abbreviations, like Mt. for mountain, or p.m. for afternoon.
5. Periods and commas indicate the size of a number. In English, commas are usually used before every three figures in a number, as 3,067,891. (In some countries, such as India, a different system may be used.) A period is used after a full number if a decimal fraction is to be given. 3.15 means three and fifteen hundredths. In French and other languages, commas are often used where English uses periods, and a comma is used before the decimal fraction (English 3.15 is French 3,15).

It is quite possible that all of these ways of using the period will be helpful to a translator, either in the text of the Bible itself, or in the reference system. However, even if only one or two of them are used, the period will still be one of the most important punctuation marks, and certainly every language will want to use it.

Comma (,)

Some of the most important uses of the comma are listed here.

1. A comma is used as a mark at *the end of a clause* which is not the end of a sentence. There is no need to worry about how to define a "clause", however. A comma can be used in a very practical way, to show the reader the places where there are important breaks in thought or in punctuation. Sometimes it may be possible to read the words of a sentence in more than one way. By putting a comma in a place where there is supposed to be a break, we can usually show which of the two possible readings is the correct one, and to keep an experienced reader from making a mistake. (In English, "The man who has six children arrived late." has a different meaning from "The man, who has children, arrived late.") Translators will almost certainly want to use commas; but they should use them in the places where they are useful in their own languages, and not try to put them in simply because they are used in a particular place in the language they are translating from.
2. Commas are also used to separate *items in a list*. For example, "gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2.11). Languages which put together lists as English does may find it useful to use commas in this way. Other languages may have "list words" which are used between each word in the list. These words are doing the same thing that commas do in English, and it is probably unnecessary to use commas for lists in languages like this.
3. Commas are also used *in numbers*, although the meaning of the comma is different from language to language, with English and French representing two different systems. This was discussed in point 5 in the section on the period, so there is no need to say more about it here.

Quotation marks or inverted commas (" ")

Quotation marks can occur in many different forms. There are differences between languages, and even between different books printed in the same language. Whatever they may look like, they are marks at the beginning and end of a quote, to show just exactly what words are being quoted. Some of the purposes they are used for are the following:

1. *To mark direct speech*. In a story, when one of the characters speaks, and the writer wants to give the actual words he used, this is called direct speech, and it is usually marked by quotation marks.
2. *To show that you are quoting what someone wrote or said*. This use is of course similar to the previous one, but it is used in a different type of writing. There may be no characters at all, but the writer wants to refer to the actual words of someone else, and he sets these off by quotation marks.

3. *To refer to a word or phrase.* Quotation marks are often put around a word to show that you are talking about the word itself, and not about its meaning. For example, someone might say that he likes the sound of the word "feather".

Quotation marks are an important type of punctuation, and many people may feel that they should be used even in languages which do not really need them. If so, there is no objection. However, not all languages use quotation marks. If a translator feels that quotes are clearly marked by words in his language, and that there will be no advantage in using quotation marks, then he should certainly not feel that he has to use them.

There are two types of quotation mark, often called *double quotes* (" ") and *single quotes* (‘ ’). They can be used to distinguish different types of quote. For example, it frequently happens that it is necessary to have a quote within a quote. In Matthew 2.5-6 the chief priests give Herod an answer about the Messiah. Their answer is given in double quotes in the Good News Bible. Part of their answer is a quotation from the prophet, and this is enclosed in single quotes. Since their own speech finishes at the same point that they finish quoting the prophet, there are a single quote and a double quote together at the end of verse 6. This is very common in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, where some translations may have as many as four or five different levels of quotation in one passage. The reason for this is that Hebrew typically reports things in direct speech, whereas many other languages tend to use a higher proportion of indirect speech. (In the Revised Standard Version translation, for example, there are four levels of quotation in Jeremiah 7.1-4, although only the first and the last of these are marked with inverted commas.) It is often possible to reduce the number of quotes within quotes by translating some direct speech as indirect speech.

Sometimes double quotes are used to quote speech, and single quotes are used to refer to words. However, there are various other systems, and to some extent it is up to each individual writer to decide just how he wants to use these punctuation marks. It is possible for the use of quotation marks to be very complicated, so even if translators do decide that they want to use them, it will not be necessary to follow exactly the system that someone else uses. Quotation marks should be used as long as they are helpful, but they should not become a burden to the reader. In cases where it may seem necessary to use a number of quotes within quotes, the translator should think carefully about the natural way of speaking in his language. It may well be that alternatives can be found, such as using indirect speech at some point, or by simply omitting quotation marks at one or more levels.

Question mark (?)

The question mark is used to show that a sentence or part of a sentence is a question. Like quotation marks, it is quite common; and it may be helpful to use it even in languages where it is not really needed. In languages like English, where intonation alone can sometimes mark a question, a question mark can be a very important clue to the meaning, and it should definitely be used. In fact for those languages where questions are often only different from statements in their intonation, it may be a good idea to use the question mark at the

beginning of the sentence as well as at the end, as Spanish does. This will help the reader to read and understand the sentence correctly the first time, and not find only when he comes to the end that he has read it the wrong way.

Exclamation mark (!)

This is used to show that a sentence has a feeling of enthusiasm or excitement or some other strong emotion. Any sentence which is supposed to show such an emotion should be translated so that the emotion is clear from the words of the sentence, and the exclamation mark should not really be necessary. This is one item of punctuation which many translators will not need to introduce into their languages.

Colon (:)

A colon is one of the more specialized punctuation marks of English and some other languages. Its main use is to point ahead. It shows that what follows is in some way related to what has gone before. The material after the colon may be a list, a summary, or an explanation. It is also often used to introduce a quotation.

It should be possible to replace colons with either periods or commas, depending on the situation. This is another punctuation mark that could easily be left out when developing a new writing system.

A colon has also often been used to separate the chapter number from the verse number in a Biblical reference (as in Luke 14:21); but a period will do just as well for this purpose.

Semicolon (;)

A semicolon is used like a comma at the end of clauses; but in English it marks a longer or more important break than a comma usually would. Many languages will find that there is no need for semicolons. They can usually be replaced by periods or commas. However, if a language needs to distinguish between two different types of break or pause within sentences, the semicolon may be used for one type and the comma for the other.

Semicolons are sometimes useful in lists of references, to separate important parts of the list from each other. Within each important part, items would be separated by commas. (For illustration of this, see the reference system of the Good News Bible.) Even here, however, alternatives could be used, so semicolons should not be introduced unless they are really needed.

Dash (—)

In English, a dash is used to indicate a break in the thought, or to introduce definitions, explanations or examples. It will usually be possible to find alternative ways of punctuating these places, so the dash is probably another punctuation mark that will not really be needed in a new system.

It may be helpful to give a word of warning at this point. The Good News Bible uses dashes quite frequently, especially in certain parts of the New Testament. Translators sometimes use the GNB as a model for punctuation and paragraphing, so they should beware of falling into the trap of putting dashes wherever the GNB has dashes. Each of these sentences should be translated according to the needs of the language, and if dashes are not part of a language's system, they should of course not be used.

Parentheses or brackets ()

Parentheses are put around material which is placed in the middle of a sentence but which is not part of the sentence. Often it explains something which is part of the sentence, or makes a comment about it. At other times, parentheses may be placed around one or more whole sentences which have the same purpose in a longer passage. That is, they explain or comment on something, without being a part of the passage. The Good News Bible places parentheses of this sort in John 3.24 and in 4.2, 8, and 9.

There is no real need for this information to be placed in parentheses. And it may be easier just to let the information stand as part of the text than to try to explain to people what parentheses are for, and to try to make rules about when they should be used. However, as with dashes, if parentheses are used, they should be used according to the rules of the language. Translators should not use parentheses just because the English or French version they are following happens to use them at some point. If you compare different versions in the same language, you will see that they do not all use parentheses at the same place.

In the Good News Bible parentheses are used in the parallel passage references, and they are also used in illustration captions in the references to the verses that the illustrations go with. There is no real need for parentheses in these places; and if parentheses are not part of the punctuation system of a language, they should not be used in these places either.

Italic type and underlining

When a writer wants to give special emphasis to one or more words, these can be printed in a type different from the ordinary type of the book, called italic type or italics. The same effect can be produced by underlining. This is not used very frequently in Bibles, and it is probably simpler not to introduce it into a new punctuation system.

It is also the custom in English to print titles of books in italic type. Thus, in 2 Kings 16.19 in the Good News Bible, a book called *The History of the Kings of Judah* is printed in italics. There is no need to introduce this custom into other languages. Italic type is also used in the reference system of versions like the GNB, but this also does not need to be introduced into other languages. Note especially that in areas where many people do not read fluently, the different shape of the letters in italic type can be quite confusing to these readers.

Other types of punctuation

There are other rarely used types of punctuation. For example, in Mark 14.68 in the Good News Bible, Peter says "I don't know . . . I don't understand what you are talking about." The **three dots** here are meant to show that Peter started to say something but did not finish it. These same three dots are also used in illustration captions in GNB to show that the words quoted in the caption are not complete. For example, at Mark 14.72, the text reads "a cock crowed a second time and Peter remembered". The caption reads "a cock crowed . . . and Peter remembered", showing that the words "a second time" have been left out. A translator needs to understand why the text is printed this

way in the English, but there is no need to do the same thing in his own language.

Hyphens are used to show that a word has been divided, when it is too long to fit on one line, and part of it must be placed on the next line. If words in a language are reasonably short and the translator prefers not to have them divided, then it may be possible to arrange for the printer never to divide words. But in most languages words will have to be divided when printed, so the hyphen will have to be taught as part of the system. In English and some other languages hyphens are also used in words like “fig-tree”, but it is better to think of these as part of the spelling system of English. Similarly, **apostrophes** as in “Peter’s house” are only part of the English spelling system. Hyphens and apostrophes which are just part of the English spelling system should of course not be copied into other languages.

Summary

The punctuation system of a language should help the readers to understand better what is written. Therefore it should fit the real needs of the language, and not simply take over something from another language which is not really helpful or which is hard for readers to learn. There may be a few important punctuation marks, such as question marks and quotation marks, which could be used even when a language does not really need them, so that the language looks more like what people think a language should be like. But other marks, such as colons, semicolons, dashes, and parentheses, should be used only if they really do help the readers to better understand their own language. And if they are used, they should be used only when the language itself needs them. Translators should resist the temptation to use a punctuation mark simply because they see it in the version that they are following in another language.

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TYPEWRITER KEYBOARDS: STANDARDS FOR THIRD-WORLD LANGUAGES

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Bible translation projects acquire in various ways the typewriters for the production of their manuscripts. One may be borrowed, another may be ordered specially for the project, another may be produced for use by several language projects, and so on. Whatever the history of the typewriter, the keyboard of the machine, more often than not, reflects certain decisions as to how best to include all of the keyboard symbols necessary for the third-world language (s). It is evident that just as the Roman alphabet was constructed to suit the needs of the sound structures of certain European languages, so the typewriter and its keyboard were also invented and designed by users of certain European languages. Thus the need of some standards for adapting the keyboard to use in a large range of languages.