

option that has the most positive effects and that minimizes the negative effects as much as possible. Such a view on problems with section headings would be more fruitful than searching for the one exactly fitting solution, which may never be found. It is even worse to think to have found a solution while overlooking the negative effects the solution involves.

References

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NOTES

Beware of Multiple Gods—A Note on Acts 3.13

"Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's God, our ancestors' God, he has lift up on top his workman Jesus." (Backtranslation of a draft of Acts 3.13a)

"If someone read this verse, how many gods would they think Peter was talking about?" I asked during a recent checking session. One of the men read it, looked up at me and said, "Definitely two different gods—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's god and our ancestors' god." A grammarian might have argued that the third singular pronoun "he" should have corrected that reading of the text. A biblical scholar might have argued that any informed reader of the Bible would know that "our ancestors" refers to "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." The reality for the normal reader of this language, however, was that two gods were being discussed. The problem was fairly easily resolved by changing the order of the phrases and deleting one "God." The revised text now reads, "Our ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's God, he has lift up on top his workman Jesus." Thankfully this translation only had two gods. At times in my checking of translations I have encountered four different gods—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and our ancestors' God. Beware of multiple Gods!

I had semi-jokingly written the above paragraph after we had finished ch. 3 little knowing that in Acts 7.32 we would encounter that exact situation in the rough draft that read, "I am your father's God, Abraham's God, Isaac's God, and Jacob's God." When we reached that verse we all knew that it had to be revised and so I tried to do the "cut and paste" solution of taking that revised phrase from Acts 3.13 and inserting it into Acts 7.32. Unfortunately, due to the grammatical context, this was not an acceptable solution. After more discussion, the revised translation of Acts 7.32 reads, "I am your ancestors' God, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." I must admit that I do not understand the

complexities of the grammar of this particular language in Papua New Guinea, but the important thing is that now there is just one God rather than four.

Below is a list of passages in the Old and New Testament that are most likely to cause this kind of difficulty in some languages. These are examples of multiple definitions of the same person which are placed next to each other. Other similar cases also exist in the Bible, though not often with such drastic implications as to create multiple Gods! This is, however, not the only way to create multiple Gods. Later in that same checking session as we looked at Acts 9.2, one of the translation checkers asked me, “Is there a God in Damascus?” “A God in Damascus,” I said, trying to figure out how in the world this question came out of the verse we had been reading. In the NRSV this verse says, “and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” I finally looked very carefully at the translation of the words in Saul’s request and sure enough there was a God in Damascus because the text said, “You write a letter and say to the head men who are watching the house for talking with the God who is in Damascus . . .” The words weren’t totally wrong but because of the nature of relative clauses in PNG languages, the text said that God was the one in Damascus rather than it being the synagogue of the Jews that was in Damascus. This is an example where the structure of the target language is significantly different from that of the source language, and confusion results from following the source structure too closely. Revising this part of the verse was quite a challenge, but since I didn’t want them thinking that there was a God in Damascus in addition to the God in Jerusalem, I thought it best to take the time to do the revision. The current translation says, “You write a letter to the head men who are in Damascus. These head men watch the house for talking with God. You write and say like this . . .”

Passages in which multiple Gods are a distinct possibility (all quotations are from the NRSV):

Old Testament

Gen 28.13	the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac;
Gen 31.42	the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac,
Gen 31.53	the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor—the God of their father
Gen 32.9	God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac
Gen 43.23	your God and the God of your father
Exod 3.6	God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob
Exod 3.15	the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob
Exod 3.16	God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob
Exod 4.5	the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob
1 Kgs 18.36;	God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel
2 Chr 30.6	
1 Chr 29.18	the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors

Dan 3.28, 29 the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

New Testament

Matt 22.32; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob
 Mark 12.26;
 Luke 20.37

Acts 3.13 the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the
 God of our ancestors

Acts 7.32 the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac,
 and the God of Jacob

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A Note on Double Names in Kings and Chronicles

Names in the Bible can at times be confusing. Some people may be referred to by more than one name. And then there are situations where two people are referred to by the same name. So long as they are far enough away from each other in the historical record and in the pages of the Bible this is not usually a problem. However, there are some particularly confusing examples in the books of Kings and Chronicles, where two variants of the same name are both used for two people who are closely connected with each other in time and circumstance.

Hiram and Hiram: King and Craftsman

The king of Tyre, who was a good friend of King David and an ally and partner of King Solomon, is called *Hiram* (which should be pronounced *Hee-ram*, rather than *High-ram*) in 2 Sam 5.11, throughout 1 Kings (chs. 5, 9, 10) and in 2 Chr 14.1. But in 2 Chronicles 2, 8, and 9, he is referred to as *Huram* (*Hoo-ram*). The confusion deepens when the craftsman whom Solomon hires to make the metalwork for the temple, who is also from Tyre, is called *Hiram* throughout 1 Kings 7 and *Huram* in 2 Chr 4.11. With the single exception of 2 Chr 14.1, the Chronicler prefers the name *Huram* for both men, while the writer of Kings uses *Hiram* for both of them.

There are two main approaches to handling this confusing situation in translation:

- (1) Translators may choose to use the form of the name as found in each instance in the Hebrew Bible. In this case it may be advisable to include footnotes to indicate that King Hiram and King Hiram are the same person, and that craftsman Hiram and craftsman Hiram are the same person, but that the craftsman is not the same person as the king! This may be the better solution for translations oriented towards the source language text.
- (2) For functional-equivalence translations, a better solution would be to choose one name to refer consistently to the king and the other to refer to the craftsman. Since Hiram is the more familiar name, and the king is the more frequently mentioned, this would lead to using: