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## From the Editor

The Bible Translator  
2020, Vol. 71(3) 257–258

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DOI: 10.1177/2051677020977492

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In a world where Covid-19 has determined that almost nothing can be “business as usual” and Bible translation organisations, like many others, have had to find different modalities for many of their activities, it is pleasing to be able to offer a “normal” issue of *The Bible Translator* in which a number of perennial topics, along with some new ones, are discussed. This issue contains two Practical Papers, five Technical Papers, and two shorter Notes.

### Practical Papers

In both 2 John and 3 John we meet the phrase *stoma pros stoma*, literally “mouth to mouth.” Is this, as is usually supposed, simply idiomatic for “face to face,” or does it do some extra duty? **Cody Beasley** suggests that it evokes Num 12.8, and the allusion to the “prophet like Moses” relates to the author’s theological claims about his ministry.

**Rebecca Grossman** takes us back to the ever-pressing question of how to encourage translators to produce natural-sounding translations, rather than wooden replicas of source or model texts. She draws on experience in West Africa where discourse analysis workshops attempted to alert indigenous translators to the genius of their own language, even as they encounter a foreign text and render it accessible to their own community.

### Technical Papers

**Vitaly Voinov** closely examines cases in both testaments where the speaker in the text changes but this is not explicitly signalled. Some of these cases are widely accepted as such, but others are more contended. However, in all cases, decisions about the inferred speaker have significant impacts on the way the passage is translated. Voinov analyses the relevant texts and also provides a toolkit of translation techniques for handling them.

What did David’s servants fear would happen (2 Sam 12.18) if they told the king of the death of his son? **Ethan Jones** adduces a wide range of examples from the Hebrew Bible in examining the syntax and semantics of the phrase וַיִּשָּׂה רָעָה. He argues that it is not reflexive—the servants were not fearing self-harm by David, but rather harm to others (including themselves).

**Benjamin Scolnic** wades resolutely into what J. A. Montgomery called the “dismal swamp” of Dan 9. His purpose in doing so is very specific, as he argues that the prediction about the restoration of Jerusalem does not refer to its robustness to attack (*hārûš*, often translated “moat”) but rather its being under a decree of judgement.

The convention in translation of the Old Testament of using a word that means “lord” or “master” or “owner” to render the Hebrew Tetragrammaton goes back to the Septuagint. **John Bainbridge** argues that it is time to re-examine this practice. Despite a change in usage which has seen “Lord” and its equivalents in European languages almost drop out of sight, there has been strong resistance to changing its use in the Bible. This is due often to a desire to preserve what is perceived as holy, a tendency which goes back to the use of *nomina sacra* in ancient texts. Bainbridge also points out that the LXX translators for the most part used *kurios* without a definite article when translating *yhwh*, suggesting they saw it serving as a proper name. This gives permission to exploit a varied, context-sensitive approach to translating *kurios* in the New Testament, and Bainbridge provides a number of suggestions for doing this.

**Timothy Gabrielson** draws attention to a play on words in Jas 2.20-23 which often goes unnoticed. James uses three different words drawn from the semantic field of “completion” or “fulness” in close proximity to each other. This contributes, Gabrielson argues, to a thematic development in the book of James, and has been picked up in texts from the next generation (*Shepherd of Hermas* and *Didache*).

## Notes

This issue concludes with two stimulating short notes. **David Clark** puzzles over Paul’s conclusion to the discussion on head coverings for women, where he says “we have no such/other custom.” There is a double ambiguity here—not only the key word *toiautēn*, but also the identity of the custom is not clear. Clark argues that Paul is leaving open other possibilities, rather than shutting down argument.

**Philip Noss** writes in direct response to an article by Izaak de Hulster, published in two parts in the April and August 2020 issues of *TBT*. He provides examples of the way the Gbaya translation in West Africa uses ideophones to supplement ideas in the Song of Songs, illustrating some of de Hulster’s proposals but in a way not explicitly envisaged by him. But this note is also an example of something we are keen to see more of—well-formed responses to papers published.

If something you read in this or any issue of *TBT* pleases or irritates you, or sets you thinking along a somewhat different track, we would be very open to receiving and publishing your response.

*Stephen Pattemore*