



THE WYCLIFFE ARABIC BIBLE PRODUCT OF THE WORLD-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT?

By Albert James Dager

IN FEBRUARY, 2012, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Frontiers, and Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) announced plans to release new Arabic and Turkish translations of the Bible in which the words “Father” and “Son” are replaced with “Allah” and “Messiah” respectively, and the term “Son of God” is translated as “Messiah of God.” The reasoning, according to the three organizations working cooperatively, is that in certain cultures a wrong impression of Jesus’ relationship to the Father would be misunderstood as the two having a biological connection. The news has sparked responses from agreement to outrage among Christians.

Biblical Missiology, a ministry of Horizons International, has petitioned Wycliffe and SIL to retain the proper words. Horizons International has an outreach to Muslims to bring them to Christ. According to Biblical Missiology, the following issues are critical and must be corrected:

Western missions agencies Wycliffe, Frontiers and SIL are producing Bibles that remove *Father*, *Son* and *Son of God* because these terms are offensive to Muslims....

- Wycliffe/SIL produced *Stories of the Prophets*, an Arabic Bible that uses “Lord” instead of “Father” and “Messiah” instead of “Son.”
- Frontiers worked with an SIL consultant to produce *True Meaning of the Gospel of Christ*, an Arabic translation which removes “Father” in reference to God, and removes or redefines “Son,” e.g. the Great Commission in Mt 28:19 reads, “Cleanse them by water in the name of God, his Messiah and his Holy Spirit.”
- Frontiers produced a Turkish translation of Matthew, distributed by SIL, that uses “guardian” for “Father” and “representative” or “proxy” for “Son.”
- SIL consulted on the Bengali *Injil Sharif*, which translated “Son” as “Messiah” and “Son of God” as “God’s Uniquely Intimate Beloved Chosen One.”

By replacing or removing “Father” or “Son” from the text of Scripture, these translations fail to portray God as who he is: the familial, eternal, loving God the Father,

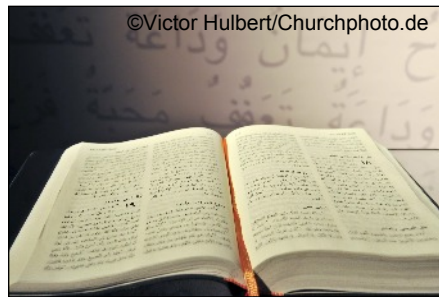
Son and Spirit. The deity of Jesus is obscured, and thus the self-sacrifice of God on our behalf.¹

The controversy arose in large part as a response to an article titled “Translating Familial Biblical Terms: An Overview of the Issue” written by Andrea and Rick Brown for *Mission Frontiers*, a publication of the U.S. Center for World Mission. According to this article, a strict translation of the terms “Father” and “Son” would not express the distinction between a social father and a biological father. Therefore, they reason, Muslim readers would assume that Jesus was born of Mary through a sexual encounter (much as Mormons believe). According to the authors:

The problem is that these translations end up attributing a biological meaning to the fatherhood of God, implying he reproduced the Son, the angels, or even the spirits of people through sexual activity. This meaning was not communicated by the original-language expressions, and it conflicts with the intended meaning of the text.

This mistake results in readers understanding the Lord’s Prayer to say “Our Begetter, who is in heaven,” and understanding Jesus to be “God’s (procreated) offspring.” The “longing of creation” (Rom 8:19) is understood to be “for the revealing of God’s biological children.” Such wordings are inaccurate because they add a procreative meaning that was absent from the original, and they sideline the important interpersonal relationships that were expressed in the original text. Readers from polytheistic religions readily accept that gods procreate with goddesses and with women, and they assume the phrase Offspring of God signifies a procreated origin. Readers in many Muslim language groups understand Offspring of God in a similar way, namely that it means God had sexual relations with a woman; unlike polytheists, however, they reject this possibility and consider the phrase to be a blasphemous corruption of the Bible that insults God by attributing carnality to him. They fear that even saying such a phrase will incur

¹ Biblical Missiology’s petition at <http://www.change.org/petitions/lost-in-translation-keep-father-son-in-the-bible>



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the wrath of God. These misunderstandings disappear, however, when translators express the divine familial relationships in ways that do not imply sexual activity on the part of God. Muslim readers and listeners can then focus on the message without being preoccupied with the fear of attributing carnality to God, and when they do, they recognize that the deity and mission of Christ is evident throughout the Gospels.²

Rick Brown is a translation consultant with SIL who, according to Biblical Missiology, has for years been publishing articles promoting alternative terms for “Father” and “Son.”

In response to these concerns Biblical Missiology states:

Wycliffe/SIL justify using alternative terms to Father and Son because they say Muslims cannot hear these terms in relationship to God without inferring that God had sex with Mary, a blasphemous notion in Islam—and Christianity as well. There are at least two problems with this justification: it is not true and it is not biblical. The justification is not true in that native speakers of Arabic, Turkish, Bangla, and other languages say their words for “Father” and “Son” do not have these sexual implications—and certainly not any more than other languages. For example, the Qur’an itself uses the phrases “son of the road” in reference to a traveler, and “son of Mary” in reference to Jesus, born of a virgin. No Muslim thinks “son” in these cases is a result of sexual intercourse. Other Arabic speakers reject the notion that their commonly used terms are inadequate. As Jihan Husary says, “Arabic is my native language so I can affirm that there is no valid reason to change those terms in Arabic.” Second, the justification is not biblical in that we do not have the authority to change the eternal terms for God, for any reason. Muslims’ common obstacle to these terms is theological, not sexual. It is indeed blasphemous in Islamic thought that God could have a Son. But a Muslim’s theological objection of blasphemy is a misunderstanding, which would not justify changing the terms. If translators have never replaced familial language because of actual theological objections, why suddenly should perceived sexual objections justify doing so? Objections or misunderstanding should be addressed in the footnotes.³

As a result of outrage expressed by numerous Christians and Christian organizations, Wycliffe/SIL asked the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to review Wycliffe and SIL’s translation of “God the Father” and the “Son of God.”

Dr. Robert E. Cooley, president emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, chaired the WEA panel which consisted of theologians, Biblical scholars, translators, linguists and missiologists “representing a broad cross-section of the global Church.”

On page 5 we report the results of that review.

² Mission Frontiers: <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/blog/post/translating-familial-biblical-terms>

³ Biblical Missiology FAQs: “Wycliffe/SIL defends using alternative terms because of sexual implications connoted in Father-Son language. What’s your response?” <http://biblicalmissiology.org/translation-petition-faqs/#five>

COMMENTARY

The Browns’ statement that “These misunderstandings disappear, however, when translators express the divine familial relationships in ways that do not imply sexual activity on the part of God,” is misleading. The Arabic translations in question do not express “the divine familial relationships” in any way. They completely eliminate the Father-Son relationship.

Biblical Missiology is to be commended for its diligence in responding to Wycliffe, Frontiers and SIL International’s convoluting of God’s Word. Both SIL and Wycliffe have strong histories of promoting God’s Word throughout the world ever since they were founded by William Cameron Townsend in 1934 and 1942 respectively. So this departure from biblical accuracy is all the more disconcerting.

SIL was founded to translate portions of Scripture for third-world people. Wycliffe and SIL have partnered since Wycliffe was founded. Until this issue arose, there was little in the way of negativity that could be laid at either organization’s feet.

With Rick Brown’s influence on SIL has come a departure from SIL’s previous performance. Brown’s connection to the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM) reveals a mind-set consistent with the World-Christian Movement. The USCWM, located in Pasadena, California, was founded in 1976 by Ralph D. and Roberta Winter, ostensibly to “champion the cause of the ‘unreached peoples.’” As noble as this sounds, USCWM has engaged in less-than-biblical approaches to missions. Its *Perspectives* course, utilized by churches and missions organizations around the globe, is an eclectic mix of biblical truth and unbiblical reasoning, much of which revolves around a social gospel that, by some of its own accounts, is essential to the Gospel of salvation. In other words, the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ is ineffectual without social and political involvement. The USCWM also stresses that the conversion of a tribal leader to Christ is all that is necessary to count the entire tribe as being converted. Additionally, Christ can be found in some form or another through all the world’s religions, so it isn’t necessary for converts to leave those religions. They can worship Jesus within their religion. (An exposé of USCWM can be found in my book, *The World Christian Movement: A Great Delusion Leading to the Religio-Political State of the Anti-Christ*, 2001, Sword Publishers.)

Unless one understands the World-Christian Movement, one cannot understand fully why Wycliffe would embark on this approach to its Arabic Bible (Muslims can “worship” Jesus within Islam’s understanding of Him), or the impetus behind or nature of the neo-evangelical approach to missions. The objective is the transformation of society; the proclaiming of the Gospel (or what loosely resembles the Gospel) is merely a tool to achieve that transformation. It isn’t as important to convert individuals as it is to transform people groups and nations so that the World-Christian Movement’s concept of righteousness prevails in their societies. In order to achieve the transformation of society it is necessary to build bridges of understanding. This may often require setting aside the literal truth of Scripture for a more pragmatic approach in order to gain the confidence of those within the society targeted for transformation.

Thus, USCWM's approach to the Gospel reveals a liberal mind-set that allows for the perversion of Scripture in order to achieve the dominionist agenda of converting the world to Christ—this for political and social advantage on the part of the dominionists who hope to rule the world with a rod of iron without Jesus present on the earth. (See *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, Sword Publishers.)

As far as Wycliffe and SIL's appeal to WEA for consideration of substituting unbiblical words for "Father" and "Son," the WEA itself is corrupted by the World-Christian Movement. The stated objective of its affiliated European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) is the transformation of society:

Whatever its Christian history, Europe is now, far more secular, especially in the political elites of some nations. Increasingly, Christians find ourselves out of step with the mainstream beliefs, values and behavioural norms of our post-Christian societies. God calls us to be actively involved in these societies, **working for their transformation**.

A very important consideration in making our views known is how to substantiate them. If we use Bible verses or dogmatic arguments, we will lose the credit we gained with our introduction. The arguments we use should be credible for anyone, whatever worldview he or she may have. We don't need to hide our convictions, but we will not convince others with arguments built upon a belief that they do not share. So we should – in the tradition of Christian apologetics – prove the Christian views to be the best for everyone, not "because God says so", but because everyone will discover that God's solutions are the best for all.⁴ (Emphasis ours)

Christian views do not necessarily equal God's truth. And God's truth is not the "best" for everyone; it is the only truth for everyone. What the authors are saying is that when everyone discovers that Christian solutions are the best for them, they will acquiesce to Christians in their midst to guide the transformation of their society. This is the goal of Christian Reconstruction, a neo-evangelical approach to dominion theology. (For an in-depth analysis of Christian Reconstruction, see our book, *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, 1990, Sword Publishers.)

The EEA also suggests using the Alpha Course:

There are lessons we can learn from The Alpha Course, which is both an excellent evangelistic tool and a great model of communication. Everything about it is designed to build communication bridges with non-believers. The course allows for relaxed, nonthreatening discussion and questioning, the talks refer to relevant stories and do not presume any previous understanding.⁵

The WEA references a National Association of Evangelicals position paper on civic responsibility for evangelicals:

⁴ "COMMUNICATING OUR CHRISTIAN VIEWS," Kris Vleugels and EEA's Public Authorisation Team, <http://worldidea.org/pdf/EEA-How-to-Communicate-Our-Views-KV-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

As Christian citizens, we believe it is our calling to help government live up to its divine mandate to render justice (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). From the teachings of the Bible and our experience of salvation, we Christians bring a unique vision to our participation in the political order and a conviction that changed people and **transformed communities are possible**.

Thus **Christian civic engagement must seek to transform both individuals and institutions**. While individuals transformed by the gospel change surrounding society, social institutions also shape individuals. While good laws encourage good behavior, bad laws and systems foster destructive action. Lasting social change requires both personal conversion and institutional renewal and reform.⁶ (Emphases ours)

The institutions targeted by the World-Christian Movement are the seven "mountains" or "spheres" of society—family, religion, government, the media, arts and entertainment, education and business. The idea is to transform these aspects of human society globally in order to bring about a more just order.

Not all involved in the World-Christian Movement believe in dominion theology to its fullest extent—that the "Church" will rule the nations without the Lord present. Many believe that only His return will bring full dominion. But they do not realize that the original motivators of the transformation process are Christian Reconstructionists who do hold that aberrant theology. To Christian Reconstructionists it doesn't matter if all involved in their activism understand or even agree with them; they are using them in the hope of realizing the fruition of their quest for dominion.

There are also those who may not agree with the ultimate end of Christian Reconstruction, but who are ignoring it because they honestly believe that the transformation of society is integral to the Gospel.

The influence of USCWM's Rick Brown upon SIL's translations, coupled with SIL's affiliation to Wycliffe, is a solid link to the World-Christian Movement. Wycliffe also lists among its Ministry Partnerships, Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth With a Mission (YWAM), and Oakcliff Bible Fellowship pastored by Tony Evans, popular speaker for Promise Keepers.

Campus Crusade for Christ and YWAM are two organizations involved in C. Peter Wagner's spiritual warfare strategy to transform society. One of Tony Evan's outreaches is The Urban Alternative (TUA), "dedicated to **transforming individuals, families, churches and communities** through the sound teaching of the word of God." (Emphasis ours)

At TUA, we believe that when we function as we were designed, there is a divine power that changes everything. It renews and restores ... because it is the life of Christ within our own (Gal. 2:20). As we align ourselves under Him, there is an alignment that happens from deep within – where He brings about full restoration. He turns

⁶ National Association of Evangelicals, "For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility," http://www.worldangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_318_link_1327803460.pdf

chaos into calm, giving us the freedom to hope again, breathe again and dream again.

In His presence, we discover a power that permeates with peace. It is an atmosphere that revives and makes whole. As it impacts us, it impacts others – **transforming every sphere of life** in which we live.

We call it His Kingdom agenda ... where through Him, we are touching heaven and changing earth.⁷ (Emphasis ours)

Again, we must be careful not to paint all Wycliffe associates or workers with the World-Christian Movement with the same brush. The vast majority are dedicated to bringing the Gospel to people groups in those groups' languages. The histories of both Wycliffe and SIL have displayed dedicated service from top to bottom. This is why many believers are so distressed about their decision to eliminate the Father-Son references in their Arabic Bibles. By giving the World Evangelical Alliance the decision of whether or not to proceed with those translations, Wycliffe and SIL essentially surrendered to the World-Christian Movement. And, of course, WEA did confirm the approach to eliminate the Father-Son references.

William Townsend would be outraged to witness what his organizations have done here. Why was it necessary to seek input from a panel “representing a broad cross-section of the global Church”? And why was it necessary for WEA to take the better part of a year to come to any conclusion? Any novice to the faith should be able to recognize that to omit the Father-Son relationship destroys the essence of the Gospel. Jesus came to reveal the Father to us (Luke 10:22). Throughout His ministry He refers to God as His Father.

It is evident that such a course of action was either Wycliffe/SIL's attempt to put off their detractors, or that the leaders of Wycliffe/SIL are so immature in the faith they should not even be in the business. The third possibility is too onerous: they are not true believers and have usurped their positions in order to pervert the Scriptures, using their Arabic translations as the foundation for a new course away from the purity of the Gospel in favor of a liberal theology that puts social action and global peace above the Word of God.

As far as the “Father-Son” controversy is concerned, where is the controversy? This is a made-up “controversy.” The truth is not controversial; only lies are controversial, and every true believer in Christ must controvert the lie. It is the liar who deems the truth controversial.

What about the following Scriptures?

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son so that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who has sent Him. (John 5:22-23)

He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself; He who does not believe God has made Him

⁷ “About The Urban Alternative,” http://www.tonyevans.org/site/c.felKLOO pGIF/b.6478425/k.E0BB/About_TUA.htm

a liar, because he does not believe the record that God gave of his Son.

And this is the record: that God has given eternal life to us, and this life is in His Son.

He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I have written these things to you who believe on the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:10-13)

It's one thing for Muslims to make God a liar; how much more culpable are “Christians” who call God a liar by pandering to Muslim theology?

This “controversy” is a case of applying the dialectic approach to Bible translation. We have the truth, but let's dialogue about other approaches to the truth so we can come to a consensus somewhere between the truth and the lie. The dialectic process is Satan's method expertly utilized by leftists, from atheistic communists to liberals in the churches, as well as by Muslims in their attempts to disarm believers in Christ.

And what about believers in Christ? We are also called sons of God, as are the angels in Heaven, both faithful and fallen. As a good brother in Christ has pointed out, other than Jesus, the sons of God in Scripture are direct creations by God. Adam was the son of God by creation (Luke 3:38), and we are all sons of Adam. In the spiritual sense we become sons of God only when we have been individually and directly born again, (Ephesians 2:10; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2). So God has many sons (Genesis 6:1-4; Job 1:6,2:1, 38:7; Luke 3:38). Jesus, however, is the unique son (Gk, *monogenes*, usually translated “only-begotten” but meaning one of a kind [see D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, page 30]). In Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is called Abraham's *monogenes*. Abraham had other sons, but Isaac was the unique, one-of-a kind son.

The term “son” is valid in all the above cases. So will these perversions of translations call us “messiahs”? Where does it end?

The first thing I thought of when reading the reasons for this vile approach to Scripture is, “If they think they cannot use the familial terms for Father and Son, at the least haven't they heard of footnotes?” I was pleased to find that this is what Biblical Missiology appeals to for any possibility of misunderstanding.

Yet why be afraid of misunderstanding in the first place? Is not the Gospel supposed to be an offense to those who refuse truth? Have these people become so enamored of their political and social agendas that they have forgotten that Jesus is a stumbling stone and a rock of offense?

Would it not be better to risk some misunderstanding in order to be true to God's Word? Or have these people forgotten that understanding comes through the Holy Spirit? God is certainly capable of imparting understanding to the pure heart seeking truth. All others will find fault no matter how far translators may go in attempting to placate them. Better to die for the truth than to score points with a lie. ❖

WEA sells out the Gospel

AN UPDATE TO OUR ORIGINAL ARTICLE ON WYCLIFFE'S ELIMINATION OF THE FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP IN ITS ARABIC TRANSLATIONS

WE RECEIVED AN e-mail from a brother in Christ who said he was going to reproduce our Wycliffe article for his church's bulletin, but one of the elders sent him a link to a *Christian Post* Web site featuring an article by *Post* reporter Michael Gryboski titled, "Bible Translators Deny Removal of Familial Terms From Arabic Translations." The article states that Wycliffe and SIL deny the allegations regarding their removing the Father-Son relationship of Jesus to His Father in its Arabic language translation. It turns out that both Wycliffe and SIL have posted new position statements on their Web sites, which give the impression that there was never such a proposal in the first place. We have reproduced excerpts from the *Christian Post* article, as well as Wycliffe's and SIL's statements, with our analysis. We leave it up to the reader to decide if Wycliffe and/or SIL are being totally truthful, or if they are obfuscating the truth in order to give a false impression.

Quoting Wycliffe's denial, the *Christian Post* article also has a statement from SIL that, "Campaigns of misinformation can be damaging if left unchallenged, so SIL encourages readers to take time to investigate the erroneous information that has been written elsewhere."

The article further states:

According to the SIL International website, there is a certain methodology regarding translating familial terms into other languages. SIL explains that there are some instances where literally translating familial terms could lead to misunderstandings for prospective readers.

"There are some cases in which it can be shown that a word-for-word translation of these familial terms would communicate an incorrect meaning," reads another statement by SIL.

"In these situations, the translations convey the accurate meaning by using terms that clearly have familial meaning but do not imply a procreative relationship. Where necessary, Scripture translations should include an explanation of the meaning of divine familial terms."

We went to the Wycliffe and SIL Web sites to look at their most recent statements regarding this issue.

The SIL Web site emphatically denies that SIL would ever remove the familial terms for the Father-Son relationship as found in the original languages of Scripture:

Is it true that SIL supports removing "Son of God" and "God the Father" in Scripture translations? No.

(January 2012) In response to various recent public accusations, SIL restates emphatically: SIL does not support the removal of the divine familial terms, "Son

of God" or "God the Father" but rather requires that Scripture translation must communicate clear understanding of these terms.

Without reservation, SIL's Scripture translation practice is to use wording which accurately communicates to the intended audience the relationship of Father by which God chose to describe Himself in relationship to His Son, Jesus Christ, as is stated in the original languages of Scripture. SIL affirms the eternal deity of Jesus Christ and insists that it be preserved in all translations.

SIL appreciates assistance in dispelling the falsehood that "SIL supports the removal of the divine familial terms." Campaigns of misinformation can be damaging if left unchallenged, so SIL encourages readers to take time to investigate the erroneous information that has been written elsewhere. Please feel free to link to this page explaining SIL's position and refer others to this information.

In April, 2012, SIL also composed a position paper titled, "SIL International Statement of Best Practices for Bible Translation of Divine Familial Terms," which was "produced at the Consultation organized by SIL International in Istanbul, Turkey in August of 2011." The purpose of the Consultation was to consider the use of familial terms regarding the Father-Son relationship in Arabic translations of Scripture. The consensus was that the familial terms must be retained without equivocation. And this is the course SIL says it will follow.

What SIL doesn't say is that the reason for the Consultation was largely due to concerns voiced by Christians who learned that SIL was, indeed, considering substituting other terms in place of the familial terms. In its "Statement of Best Practices," SIL says:

Prior to the Istanbul Consultation, it was being debated whether God's Messiah or Word of God are acceptable as translation alternatives for Son of God in the text, together with Son of God explained in the paratext [e.g., footnotes]. One of the main outcomes of the consultation was that neither God's Messiah nor Word of God adequately conveys the "divine familial" meaning of Son of God. The purpose of the Istanbul Statement is to present a set of guidelines or best practices to ensure that the "divine familial" components of meaning are communicated well in the translated text itself, not just in the paratext. This, however, should not be misunderstood as a claim that this is the only possible meaning in every occurrence of the term Son of God.

SIL's decision to maintain the familial terms in its Arabic translations seems unequivocal, at least in most instances as implied by the final sentence to that paragraph. However, SIL also admitted to considering removal of the familial terms, which is why the controversy arose in the first place. So although we commend them for their proper conclusion, it would have been good had SIL thanked their detractors for pushing them to that conclusion.

The situation is a bit different with Wycliffe, which is curious, considering Wycliffe's and SIL's "familial" relationship for so many decades.

On Wycliffe's Web site we found what Wycliffe calls "a summary of the controversy intended to help those who are newly interested in the topic." In it we read:

For almost eighty years, Wycliffe has engaged in the important and challenging ministry of Bible translation, serving millions of minority language speakers around the world. One particular challenge—the translation of the terms used to describe the unique relationship between God the Father and the Son of God in some languages that are spoken in communities dominated by Islam—has gained public attention. As an online petition circulated early in 2012, some began to make claims that Wycliffe is taking the term "Son of God" out of Scripture and making "Muslim-friendly" Bibles that include translation choices designed to appease Muslims. These claims are not true.

Wycliffe remains unashamedly committed to the integrity of Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We want to assure you that we are not removing terms for "God the Father" and "Son of God" from the Bibles that we are translating into other languages. Instead, we are seeking the most accurate way to translate those terms from the original Greek and Hebrew texts....

Wycliffe is committed to maintaining the integrity of God's Word. Contrary to what some have suggested, we are not ashamed of the truth of the Gospel and of Jesus' identity as the Son of God. Motivated by our deep commitment to integrity and by our conviction that we serve as part of the whole Church, we have asked a respected third party—the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA)—to review our practices. We anticipate their response by April 2013. Our dedication to this process includes our commitment to submit to the translation guidelines approved by this panel.

While the WEA is conducting their review, we have put those few projects in question on hold.

We contacted Wycliffe via e-mail (they do not provide a phone number for media requests), asking to speak with someone qualified to answer a few questions. I never received a reply. Thus, we are left to ask those questions in this forum, hoping to get that clarification from someone in the know.

In particular, we wish to know what is meant by the following statement:

As an online petition circulated early in 2012, some began to make claims that Wycliffe is taking the term "Son of God" out of Scripture and making "Muslim-friendly" Bibles that include translation choices designed to appease Muslims. These claims are not true.

Wycliffe remains unashamedly committed to the integrity of Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity—

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. We want to assure you that we are not removing terms for "God the Father" and "Son of God" from the Bibles that we are translating into other languages.

If Wycliffe said, "These claims are not true," why did Wycliffe engage the World Evangelical Association to make a determination of whether or not the removal of the familial terms is proper? Wycliffe certainly did not deny that they were doing this when the controversy first arose. Why, then, did Wycliffe say the claims were not true? The claims are true.

Wycliffe's wording of "other translations" obfuscated the truth that they were dedicated to removing the Father-Son relationship of Jesus to His Father from the Arabic translations. Obfuscation is the same as a lie. It is especially egregious when used to confuse or placate the Body of Christ.

By saying, "We want to assure you that we are not removing terms for "God the Father" and "Son of God" from the Bibles that we are translating into other languages," the question arises, does this mean all languages "other" than English, or all languages other than Arabic? It isn't clear. It certainly implies that this includes Arabic translations, but it doesn't. It merely includes "other translations."

So Wycliffe merely retained these terms in translations into languages other than Arabic, because the statement ends with Wycliffe affirming their commitment to the WEA's conclusion on the issue, and saying that they had put these Arabic projects on hold until the WEA's review would be completed.

And now we know that WEA affirmed the decision to remove the Father-Son references in Wycliffe's Arabic translations of the Bible.

If the claims were not true, why did Wycliffe not say that in the first place months before? Instead, they defended their position. Then they acted as if the allegations were never true in the first place. This is not honest, and does not befit an organization that works to promote the Gospel, as Wycliffe claims to do.

Contrary to what some may think, we truly want to think the best of Wycliffe and SIL. Their long history of faithfulness to the Gospel through translation into many languages must be acknowledged. But they lied when they said they never had it in mind to obscure the Father-Son relationship in their Arabic translations, and their detractors are irrational or antagonistic for no good reason.

We don't enjoy having to address this sad state of affairs. But believers in Christ are entitled to the truth. Wycliffe's and SIL's obfuscation of the truth does not reflect well on their current leadership.

Worse, they make their Arabic "Bible" a lie by tearing out the heart of the Gospel of salvation, leaving Arabic-reading people without a Savior.

This whole affair has been a disgrace, and it seems as if Wycliffe and SIL have gotten away with it. There has been no outcry of protest from voices of influence within the Christian community. Christianity as a whole is participating in Wycliffe's lie with impunity.

For the time being. ❖

WEA Completes Wycliffe/SIL “Father-Son” Report

ON APRIL 26, 2013, the World Evangelical Alliance Global Review Panel finalized its report for conveyance to Wycliffe Global Alliance and Summer Institutes of Linguistics International (SIL) on the controversy surrounding Wycliffe’s and SIL’s Arabic translations of the Bible.

Admittedly, the task at hand for the Review Panel was not only difficult, but extremely critical to the conveyance of the Gospel, not only to Muslims, but to all men everywhere. If, in order to not offend any particular people group, trusted translators of Scripture can establish legitimacy in compromising the truth of a central tenet of Scripture in regard to even one language—particularly one of the major world languages such as Arabic—the door is left wide open to compromise in any and all languages. After all, why should Muslims be the only ones to fear offending (other than, of course, the Muslim tendency to resort to violence against anyone deemed “offensive” to their god Allah and their alleged “prophet” Muhammad).

WEA’s Review Panel seemed on one hand reluctant to toy with the Father-Son relationship in definite terms, and on the other hand fearful of offending Muslims (and perhaps others) by being absolutely literal in all instances. As a result, the report tends to be a mixed bag that most likely represents input from some on the Panel who may have wished to adhere to the strict application of Scripture without compromise, and others who were willing to compromise but with reservations.

The report is 33 pages in length, and it is not possible to duplicate it in the limited space we have, so we will address the more important points, both pro and con.

At the outset WEA states a disclaimer:

WEA remained totally independent from the work of the Panel, and it was agreed that the outcomes of the process would not necessarily reflect the official view of the WEA. (p. 2)

This effectively frees WEA of any responsibility as far as complaints may be tendered toward the results. My question is how any true believers can involve themselves in any such study and not bear responsibility for its consequences.

Wycliffe and SIL also shirked responsibility to a degree, because as far as they are concerned whatever course they take from this point on will only be according to the Panel’s judgment to which they agreed before knowing what that judgment would be:

Both Wycliffe and SIL International have agreed to accept the outcomes of the Panel’s work and recommendations. They will communicate this work and [its] recommendations clearly and broadly. Funding for the Panel’s work was provided by several of the Wycliffe Global Alliance Participating Organizations. (p. 2)

This demonstrates Wycliffe’s and SIL’s complete trust in men (and women) to determine what is right for their works. Is it not foolish to commit to someone else’s judgment prior to knowing what that judgment would be? Wisdom dictates that we should know exactly to what we are committing before publicly vowing to follow it.

Yet I understand how, right or wrong, under pressure from so many believers in Jesus, leaders of a bureaucratic institution would be inclined to put the onus of their unsupportable practices on the backs of “neutral” negotiators.

Early on, the Panel acknowledged “the invaluable work Wycliffe and SIL personnel have done and are doing in making God’s Word available to new audiences.” The Panel also expressed appreciation for Wycliffe’s and SIL’s “commitment to the accurate communication of the Word.” But the Panel also sent a veiled chastising aimed at those who have challenged Wycliffe’s and SIL’s compromises on the accuracy of their Arabic translations:

We also acknowledge that it is not appropriate for outsiders who do not know the target language of a given translation to dictate to translators skilled in that language how they should do their work or to make sweeping judgments, allegedly valid for all target languages, about the translation task. (p. 4)

In other words, if you are not involved in Bible translation you should keep your opinions to yourself.

If anyone has dictated anything to Wycliffe and/or SIL how to do their work, I am not aware of it. Those of us who have expressed our concerns have appealed in brotherly love to the leaders of Wycliffe and SIL to reconsider the direction they were taking. Some have certainly written strong condemnation of their attempts to alter the purity of God’s Word for the sake of not offending Muslims, but certainly all brethren in Christ have not only that right, but that duty (Jude 3).

Additionally, the term “sweeping judgments” implies that Wycliffe’s and SIL’s detractors on this issue are boxing at the air, as if there were not legitimate reasons to protest what they are doing.

Four Primary Contexts

The Panel suggests there are four primary contexts to consider “if the message of the Bible is to be accurately and clearly communicated to an intended audience today.” The first two contexts are certainly valid:

The first context is the Old Testament, focusing on the covenant relationship between God and Israel and the development of the concept of Son of God as Messianic King. The New Testament, the second context, builds on this Old Testament context and focuses on Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God who is the Messianic King, and the fulfillment of the Old Testament covenant relationship in believers, the sons and daughters of God. (Ibid.)

But then the Panel added two other contexts it considered necessary for accurate communication of the Bible:

The translators' own cultures are the third context, which involves their cultural milieu, the interpretive tradition in which they work, and their methodology for understanding Scripture. The fourth is the context of the intended audience. Good communication will take place only if significant attention is given to understanding the receptor audiences, in this case various Muslim groups, and their cultures. (Ibid.)

I can certainly understand how culture may play a part in understanding Scriptural truth. But these cannot be put on an equal footing with the first two contexts. Either God knew about these cultural contexts when He inspired His Word to be written, or He didn't know about them. If He did not know about them, then of course man must make up for God's ignorance by devising his own methods to convey God's truths. But God was not ignorant of cultural distinctives, either in the days of the prophets and apostles who put His Word in writing or in these last days. It is not man's prerogative to meddle with the sacred texts in order to avoid offending any culture.

The written Word must not be tampered with in an effort to hopefully lead unbelievers into somehow understanding who Jesus is. To engage in such tampering is to employ guile and deception with the human reasoning that God will bless that guile with converts, and with rewards for those who use it.

Our heavenly Father does not inspire the use of guile to accomplish His purposes.

Recommendations

The Panel presented to Wycliffe and SIL ten recommendations on how to proceed with their promised adherence to the Panel's decision:

Recommendation 1 states that "When the words for 'father' and 'son' refer to God the Father and to the Son of God, these words always be translated with the most directly equivalent familial words within the given linguistic and cultural context of the recipients. In the case of languages that have multiple words for "father" and "son," translators should choose the most suitable words in light of the semantics of the target language.

The Panel rightly acknowledged that "The words for 'father' and 'son' are among the most common ways the New Testament describes God and Jesus."

There followed myriad Scriptures (not included here) offered by the Panel to support this conclusion. We cannot disagree with the following statement:

These references show the prevalence and centrality of the words for "father" and "son" in the New Testament. This prevalence testifies to the importance of fatherhood and sonship in the biblical presentation of God, an importance that constrains translators to render these words with the most direct equivalents possible. (p. 13)

Nor do we disagree with the following:

The words for "father" and "son" are among the most important ways the New Testament conveys the

central truth that Jesus is and has always been in a relationship as Son to his Father—derived from God and possessing the same divine characteristics (and thus fully divine), and yet distinct from God the Father as well. (Ibid.)

Notice also Jesus' striking statement in John 5:26 that the Father has life in himself—distinguishing him from all creatures, and in the same way, the Father has granted the Son to have life in himself. The Son's life is both non-contingent—thus putting him on the same level as God—and derived/granted—thus making him Son and not Father. Notice also Jesus' affirmation in John 17:20-26 that love, unity, and glory, have characterized his relationship with the Father from before the foundation of the world. (p. 14)

The New Testament uses other means as well to emphasize that the Son has always been Son to the Father (see John 1:1-3 for the use of the word for "Word" to state the same truth), but the words for "father" and "son" are a crucial part of the way the New Testament reveals this truth. Translators should render such crucial words as directly as possible. (Ibid.)

The word for "son" is among the most important ways the New Testament links believers to Jesus and at the same time distinguishes us from Jesus. He is the unique Son of God, and we become adopted sons (and daughters) through faith. (Ibid.)

Citing some scriptural passages, the Panel continues on the correct course:

These passages indicate the centrality of the word for "son" in the biblical presentation of salvation, and this centrality as well demands that translators render the word with the most direct equivalent possible. (p. 15)

Addressing the problem of Muslims' claims that the Scriptures have been corrupted over the centuries, the Panel drafted a statement that I doubt anyone else could have done better:

Most Muslims know that Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God and have heard that the Bible describes him as such. Non-direct translation of the words for "father" and "son" may create problems in that Muslims will think our new translations have altered the Scriptures.

One longstanding obstacle in reaching out to Muslims is the deeply-rooted Islamic conviction and claim that the current Bible we have (both Old and New Testaments) is corrupt. Christian apologetics in the Middle East have long responded to this accusation by challenging those who make it to bring out any evidence that Christians have falsified the Bible. In many cases, apologetics depended on the fact that problematic issues in the biblical text were neither removed nor softened in the course of history, but rather retained and maintained (as manuscripts and textual critical studies show when comparing older texts with current translations). **Translating**

the words for “father” and “son” in non-direct or less direct ways could belie the Christian heritage of apologetics and add substance to the Muslim claim that Christians have corrupted the Bible. (Ibid., Emphasis ours)

After starting out so well, the Panel begins a slow slide into compromise, starting with the following:

Therefore, translators should have very strong reasons for departing from a word for “son by nature” in favor of a word for “social son” or the like.... The use of compound phrases in place of the simple words for “father” and “son” may be the best way to present the truth of Jesus’ relationship to God (he is of the same nature, and the Father has eternally loved him), of exposing the inadequacies of a given culture’s understanding of fatherhood, and of showing the similarity and difference between Jesus’ relationship to God and ours. (pp.16-17)

What “very strong reasons” might translators come up with to depart “from a word for ‘son by nature’ in favor of a word for ‘social son’ or the like”? There is no sense in which Jesus may be considered a “social son” as opposed to the Son of God by nature. A “social son” may be adopted either formally or informally, but he is never a son in the familial sense. Otherwise there would be no need to distinguish him as a “social son.” Neither should Jesus under any circumstances be regarded as a “social son” in order to avoid offending someone.

Recommendation 2 states in relation to potential misunderstanding of the words for “father” and “son,” especially by Muslims, “in case of difficulties, the Panel recommends that translators consider the addition of qualifying words and/or phrases (explanatory adjectives, relative clauses, prepositional phrases, or similar modifiers) to the directly-translated words for ‘father’ and ‘son,’ in order to avoid misunderstanding. For example, as the biblical context allows, the word for ‘father’ might be rendered with the equivalent of ‘heavenly Father’ when referring to God, and the word for ‘son’ might be rendered with the equivalent of ‘divine Son,’ ‘eternal Son,’ or ‘heavenly Son’ when referring to Jesus. The Panel also encourages translators to use paratextual material to clarify and avoid misunderstanding in these cases. (p. 18)

Up to this point, there is little with which to find fault in the Panel’s recommendations. But suddenly things take a bad turn.

Recommendation 3 states “when and if necessary, the Panel recommends that translators convey nuances of meaning from the biblical context in the translation through the addition of qualifying words and/or phrases (explanatory adjectives, relative clauses, or prepositional phrases). For example, the phrase for “Son of God” in a context of Messianic kingship might be rendered with the equivalent of “anointed Son of God” or “royal Son of God.” (p. 21)

Here the Panel begins to acquiesce to Wycliffe’s and SIL’s original contention that it is sometimes necessary to depart from the literal translation of God’s Word in order to avoid misunderstanding and/or offense. The phrases “anointed Son of God” and “royal Son of God” are not equivalent to “Son of

God” in its accurate meaning. In view of Scripture’s reference to believers and angels also as “sons of God,” merely adding the appellation “anointed” does nothing more than convey the possibility that a true believer in Islam is an anointed son of God. “Royal Son of God” works no better. A believing king or magistrate might lay claim to being a “royal son of God.”

The problem is the willingness to play with the nature of Jesus in the context of Messianic kingship. As Messiah His position transcends human royalty. His role as Messiah goes beyond eventually ruling the nations; it also applies to spiritual salvation from sin.

But this is probably the lesser of two evils with Recommendation 3. The worse of the two is the rationale for it:

There are several important aspects to the Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman background to the way the phrase for “Son of God” is used in the Bible. First, the phrase grows out of the Ancient Near Eastern concept of covenant, in which the suzerain (king) called his vassals (subjects) “sons,” and the vassals called the suzerain “father” (e.g. 2 Kings 16:7). Correspondingly, the suzerain was himself regarded as a son of the gods. This background informs the understanding of Israel’s messianic king as God’s son in Psalm 2, Psalm 110, and 2 Sam 7:14, and these passages in turn inform Luke 1:32 (“he will be called the Son of the Most High”) and the quotation of 2 Sam 7:14 in Heb 1:5. In light of this background, the phrase for “Son of God” in the New testament sometimes has the connotation of “royal Son.” (Ibid.)

The term “Son of God” in Scripture is uniquely inspired by the Spirit of God; He did not borrow from pagan sources to describe His Son as He does. The pagan background does not “inform” the understanding of Israel’s messianic king as God’s Son. He stands alone on His own merit based on His unique nature as God in the flesh (which, by the way, is never mentioned in the Panel’s report, nor are the terms “God incarnate” or “God in man”).

The Panel continues with Recommendation 3 by citing ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman literature wherein fathers determined much of the identity of their sons inasmuch as sons followed their fathers’ footsteps in life. Therefore, they would be considered “similar” to their fathers. Applying this to Scripture’s appellation of “Son of God” to Jesus in some circumstances, the Panel states:

In light of this background, in certain New Testament passages, the phrase for “son of God” may mean little more than “similar to God.” This is especially the case when the phrase “son of God” is on the lips of a Gentile, as in Mark 15:39. The centurion’s statement that Jesus was “the Son of God” may mean that Jesus was like God, that he had characteristics the centurion associated with God, such as righteousness/innocence (cf. Luke 23:47). Jesus, he thought, was “the righteous Son of God.” (p. 22)

We are all encouraged to be “similar” to God. Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:48, “Therefore, you be perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.”

Theologians may argue over what the word “perfect” means, but the point is Jesus wants us to be “similar” to the Father. In that way we may be “similar” to Jesus, and made in the image of God, but we cannot be so similar to Jesus that we attain His nature as the only-begotten by the Father.

And what do the members of the panel know about the mind of the centurion? He said, “Truly this was the Son of God” after witnessing the things that occurred in relation to Jesus’ death, including the great earthquake. The centurion was in great fear; he knew he wasn’t witnessing the death of an ordinary man who may have been “similar” to God. Many Romans had heard of the claims associated with Jesus; many even believed in Yahweh, if not perfectly. God saw fit to include that centurion’s testimony in His Word for a good reason—to demonstrate the reality of Jesus as His only-begotten Son.

Recommendation 3 continues by stating:

The biblical precedent of adding qualifying adjectives or phrases to the word for “father” may be followed to add nuance to the word for “son” when applied to Jesus.

In the Panel’s discussion of recommendation 2, it was indicated that in Matthew, Jesus often adds the word for “heavenly” or the phrase for “in heaven” to the word for “father” when speaking of God. The Panel believes that this precedent can be followed not only to avoid misunderstanding, but also to add nuance to the readers’ understanding of the phrase for “Son of God.” Phrases equivalent to “royal Son,” “anointed Son,” or even “righteous Son” will help convey the nuances of the uses in the individual contexts, when translators deem that simply explaining the nuances in the paratextual material will not be sufficient. (Ibid.)

The biblical precedent of adding qualifying adjectives or phrases to the word “father” was the result of Holy Spirit inspiration; God did not inspire the writers to add these qualifying adjectives to the word “Son” in any way other than as His only-begotten Son. What gives any man the right to add to the Word what God did not include in the first place?

It may be argued that Jesus is also called Mary’s “firstborn,” God’s “beloved Son,” “Son of David,” “Son of man,” “the carpenter’s son,” and “Joseph’s son,” but none of these are qualifiers to convince unbelievers of Jesus’ true nature.

Again, terms such as “royal Son,” “righteous Son,” and “anointed Son” may legitimately be applied to righteous sons of God by adoption. Capitalizing the word “Son” does not abate that possibility in the minds of unbelievers.

Even the term “unique Son” would not convey what “only-begotten” Son conveys—that Jesus is the Word of God incarnate who became a man through the power of the Holy Spirit. To try to come up with adjectives that set Jesus apart as “unique” delineates nothing more than how a Muslim sees Mohammad as “unique.”

Recommendation 4 of the Panel rightly states:

Christians may prepare culturally-sensitive presentations of the life of Jesus and other Christian events and use these in ministry. Because these are stories drawn from the Bible, rather than translations of the Bible itself, translators and ministers may see fit to describe God and Jesus more generically in these stories, rather than using the divine familial terms. These stories could be used to introduce Muslims to the gospel message while delaying dealing with the potential misunderstandings that the divine familial terms present until inquirers have shown more interest in Jesus. (p. 24)

Why must the Lord’s familial nature in the Father be deferred to a later time after “inquirers have shown more interest” in Jesus? Is the truth of His nature not to be expressed to the world? Are we to hide truth in order to win souls? That is man’s way—using deception; it is not God’s Way. John’s Gospel is the model used for centuries by believers to convey the truth of Jesus’ nature as God in the flesh. Are we to toss that out for fear that unbelievers may recoil at its truths?

The Panel continues:

In any specific case, options or possibilities to use stories drawn from the Bible need to be carefully researched. Such genres should never be confused with or presented as translations of the Bible and should not be called *Injil* (Gospel) or the “Meaning of the Gospel.” (p. 24)

Then why bother? Either we present the Gospel, or we present something religious that is inoffensive.

Because I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” (Rom. 1:16)

Most of what the WEA Review Panel recommended comes more from intellectual reasoning than from the Spirit of God. It is done from an intellectual viewpoint with a Bible background. None of it takes into consideration that God’s ways are not man’s ways, and His thoughts higher than man’s thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). Nor does it consider that God purposely blinds those who will not believe. But for those who will believe, we need not try to coerce or fool them into believing. In either case, when conveying God’s truth to men, we are not to tamper with God’s holy Word.

But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden from those who are lost—in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ—who is the image of God—should shine upon them. For we do not proclaim ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord—and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. (2 Cor. 4:3-5)

The remaining six Recommendations deal with advice on how to implement SIL’s Best Practices Statement with regard to translations, and with technical and other aspects of Wycliffe’s

and SIL's approach to how to publicize and explain their positions. They do not require addressing here.

In closing, the Panel wrote the following Postscript:

In our work as a Panel, we have attempted to take into consideration the different sides of the current debate about divine familial terms. We have endeavored to affirm as valid the concern of some translators to do all that is possible to mitigate or remove the severe misunderstandings that the words for "father" and "son" may create in the Muslim world. At the same time, we have also sought to affirm as valid the concern of other translators that the translated text point clearly and consistently to Jesus as God's unique Son. Our research and deliberations have led us to what we consider to be a biblically-grounded method of preserving both of these concerns. We offer these recommendations with the hope that they will not add to the divisions that currently exist, but that the Holy Spirit may use them to promote a more united and powerful witness on the part of ministers of the gospel in the Muslim world and beyond. (p. 26)

How might the Holy Spirit use these recommendations to "promote a more united and powerful witness" to the lost—especially Muslims? God has already given His Word. When He did so, was He not aware of these problems that would spring up in these last days? It isn't our place or job to convert anyone.

Our place is to be witnesses of the truth of Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God who, as the Word of God, became a man whose purpose was to die for the sins of the world and one day redeem the entire creation from the clutches of Satan. When confronting false religious systems instigated by Satan, God's Word is not to be tampered with or watered down.

I do not accuse the Panel of purposely setting out to compromise the truth. But by taking "into consideration the different sides of the current debate about familial terms" rather than standing on the inviolable Word of God without regard for the opinions of men (even our opinion), the Panel has succumbed to the ungodly dialectic process. It has opted for the debate between thesis (truth) and antithesis (untruth) in order to find a common ground for consensus.

The dialectic approach is not God's invention; it was Satan's invention to obfuscate truth and implant in men's minds doubts as to what truth really is.

The WEA Panel's report will impact more than Wycliffe and SIL. Other Bible translation organizations are looking to it for guidance as well. An example is OneBook (formerly Global PartnerLink Society), which has announced that it will adopt the WEA's recommendations regarding translations targeted for Muslims.

My prayer for these men and women, as well as for Wycliffe and SIL, is that they will all repent of their gross breach upon the integrity of God's Word. ❖

A Letter of Concern

Concerned about Wycliffe's, SIL's and Frontiers's decision to avoid the Father-Son relationship of Jesus to His Father in their Arabic "Bible," Dr. Robert Simonds, founder and president of Citizens for Excellence in Education (CEE), contacted me asking if I would be willing to send a joint letter of appeal to the heads of all three organizations to cease from their plans. I agreed, and have reproduced below our letter, sent on September 11, 2012, to Bob Creson, president of Wycliffe Bible Translators, Frederick A. Boswell, Executive Director of SIL, and Dave Datema, General Director of Frontiers. We never received a response from any of them.

Dear Brethren,

Every religion claims their beliefs are superior to the Christian Bible which encapsulates both Old (Hebrew) and New (Greek) Scripture Testaments into one book.

God wrote only ONE Bible. Take it or leave it; believe it or remain an unbeliever. It is the most studied book in the world and the most historically proven over all others. It has changed the lives of billions. It has been declared inerrant by linguistic experts—huge gatherings of Evangelical scholars—who have analyzed every one of its thousands of prophecies to find that, apart from those relating to the Lord's Second Coming (yet to be realized), all have been accurate and fulfilled to the letter of script.

The Bible does not teach ecumenism; it teaches separation of true believers from unbelievers. "*I will put a division between my people and thy people*" (Ex 8:23). This word "division" in Hebrew means "redemption." The Lord Jesus said: "*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you NO! but rather division*" (Lk 12:51).

The ecumenical churches believe they must replace the pure Word of God with a "man-made Bible." To do so would be a disaster for every person involved directly, or on the boards of these three Wycliffe cooperative ministries that are spending the money of God's people to destroy our faith.

The Book of Revelation affirms Jesus as "the Son of God" (Rv 2:18; 14:14). In it, Jesus said plainly: "*if any man add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book, and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life...*" (Rv 22:18, 19). Beloved of God, please read Rv 20:10-15 on the Book of Life.

We have spent our lives in preserving the "inerrant" Word of God, not Allah or the Koran. We have over 500 scholarly theologians ready to "draw a line in the sand." Please do not fall for Satan's lies and deceit that we must change God's Word to appease a "group culture" based on Islam's Koran that calls for Muslims to slay all Jews first, then Christians, who will not accept their god—a Koran that denies the God of the Bible.

For these reasons and many more, we want you to know we are concerned for you as brothers. We know you are the leaders in Bible translation and we wish to help you disengage from this folly and continue God's great work around the world that every man may hear and know the God of creation and truth. Our people are your financial support. Please consider the following perspectives and why it is nothing less than disengagement.

Both SIL and Wycliffe have strong histories of promoting God's Word throughout the world ever since they were founded by William Cameron Townsend in 1934 and 1942 respectively. So this departure from biblical accuracy is all the more disconcerting.

William Townsend would be outraged to witness what his organizations are attempting to do by removing the Father-Son relationship from Scripture. Why is it necessary to seek input from a panel "representing a broad cross-section of the global Church"? And why is it necessary for WEA to take the better part of a year to come to any conclusion? Any novice to the faith should be able to recognize that to omit the Father-Son relationship destroys the essence of the Gospel. Jesus came to reveal the Father to us (Lk 10:22). Throughout His ministry he refers to God as His Father. His instruction is to pray, "Our Father who art in Heaven."

Consider also the following Scriptures:

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son so that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who has sent Him. (Jn 5:22-23)

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God that He has testified of his Son.

He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself; He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he does not believe the record that God gave of his Son.

And this is the record: that God has given eternal life to us, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 Jn 5:9-12)

Why be concerned about Muslims misunderstanding? Is not the Gospel an offense to those who refuse truth? Have Wycliffe, SIL and Frontiers become so enamored of their political and social agendas that they have forgotten that Jesus is a stumbling stone and a rock of offense?

Would it not be better to risk some misunderstanding in order to be true to God's Word? Or have you forgotten that understanding comes through the Holy Spirit? God is certainly capable of imparting understanding to the pure heart seeking truth. All others will find fault no matter how far translators go in attempting to placate them. Better to die for the truth than to hope in futility to make points with a lie.

For an O.T. lesson on "whose God is God" please read Elijah's illustration in I Kings 18:17-46: "Whose God is the Lord (Yahweh)"... "The Lord (Yahweh) He is God"... "The Lord (Yahweh) He is the God" (vs. 39 repeated); God's name is "Yahweh," not "Allah."

To you who would alter the all-powerful Name of God, please know you shall alter the entirety of who God is and make Jesus a liar and, at best, a mere "prophet" (as Mohammed claimed to be), and **not** the **Creator** God—the central figure of all Christianity.

Let the Muslims debate the Bible. That's how our witness of TRUTH (the Bible) can make **converts**. And the same is true with Muslims who want to know the true God. Our most successful missionaries have used the Bible as given to man by God the Father, through the Son, and via the Holy Spirit's inspiration and dictation.

I (Robert Simonds) was given the task to write a "Teacher's Guideline for Teaching Religion and Cultures in History" for the University of California and all California school teachers. Under the guise of "cultural studies," our nation's schools were teaching any and all religions but Christianity. (In the hard-copy of this letter to you men, I will include that position paper.) They (government) wanted an "all-world" acceptable ecumenical approach. When I stuck to God, the Bible, and God's Name and power, it was wildly accepted in a National Public Schools Teachers Conference by thousands of unsaved teachers who had never heard a witness for the God of the Bible. It was sent out over the Internet and made available to all teachers in America.

This is an illustration of how to evangelize with Bible Truth—NOT man's "corrections" of God's Word—and it worked so well! Teachers nationwide got to know God's own Word and were able in their public school system to see how totally different are the worldviews of other cultures that lack a true understanding of the all-powerful unaltered Bible.

This encouraging result is mentioned merely to emphasize how God's Holy Spirit will bless His Word. If I had tried to alter any words in the Holy Bible of God, its impact would have been totally lost and Christianity would have been seen as just another multicultural religion (stripped of God's power).

We love and respect you so very much. But please understand the reason for our boldness in asking you "key" leaders and your Boards of Directors to take note how serious this problem is that would result in the direct destruction of evangelism through Wycliffe Bible Translators and U.S. Missions around the world. To destroy God's great work is a frightening proposition.

In sincere prayer for your positive response,

Robert L. Simonds
President, Citizens for Excellence in Education

Albert James Dager
Editor & Publisher, Media Spotlight