

# THE METAPHORICAL WORLD OF THE SACRED WORD IN THE PREFACES OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

TRANSLATIONS FROM TYNDALE TO THE KING JAMES BIBLE

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Fabiny Tibor, The Metaphorical World of the Sacred Word in the Prefaces of the English Bible. Translations from Tyndale to the King James Bible, in: Tibor Fabiny and Sára Tóth (eds), *The King James Bible 1611 – 2011, Prehistory and Afterlife*, Budapest, 2016, Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem – L'Harmattan Kiadó, 29 – 49.

*Ama scripturas, et amabit te sapientia.  
Love the Scriptures, and wisdom will love thee.  
"Translators to the Reader" (KJB 1611)*

## THE IDEA OF THE "PREFACE" AND THE REFORMATION PREFACES TO BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Since the time of St. Jerome (331–420), Bible translators have been keen to add prefaces to their translations. This was especially significant in the time of the Reformation. Over thirty years ago, Heinrich Bornkamm collected and edited Martin Luther's prefaces to the books of the Old and the New Testament (see BORNKAMM). These prefaces are goldmines for scholars interested in 16<sup>th</sup>-century hermeneutics. William Tyndale's first, though anonymous book: the Cologne fragment of 1525 (TYNDALE 1926) (published as *The Pathway into the Holy Scripture* in 1531) and *A commendious introduction / prologue or preface unto the pistle off paul to the Romayns* (1526) were, in fact, loose English translations of Luther's German prefaces. In 2008, a young Hungarian scholar, András Mikesy published a comparative study of Luther's Preface to the Romans and its English version by Tyndale and convincingly argued that Tyndale's text is more than a simple translation (see MIKESY). I shall return to these texts in due course.

As far as Hungary is concerned, there were fragmented Bible translations in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and the first complete translation in 1590 was the work of the team of the Reformed pastor Gáspár Károli (1530–1591). The first complete Catholic Bible translation came out in 1626 by the Jesuit György Káldi (1573–1634). I mention this because an excellent selection of the prefaces to the 16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian Bible translations was published in Budapest (see ZVARA). The hermeneutical basis of religious controversies is well documented

by such an edition. This Hungarian "book of biblical prefaces" is, to my knowledge, unparalleled.

Alasdair Gray's magisterial collection *The Book of Prefaces: A Short History of Literate Thought in Words by Great Writers from Four Nations from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* richly demonstrates that writing a preface is an art in itself. A preface should be written properly so that the addressee be taught the art of reading. If so, the preface has achieved its goal. The last paragraph of the celebrated preface to the 1611 edition of the King James Version (KJV) begins with this sentence: "Many other things we might give thee warning of, gentle reader, if we had not exceeded the measure of a preface already." (DANIELL 2003: 775) Now, here ends my preface.

#### THE SUBJECT OF THE PREFACES: THE BIBLICAL WORD AS SPEECH ACT. ITS ROLE IN THE EXHORTATION TO BIBLE READING

The purpose of these prefaces was not only the "praise of the Holy Scripture" but the exhortation of the audience to read Scripture by illustrating how the word of God is at work. The word of God, as the translators of the 1611 version put it in their dedication, is "sacred" word. What historians have labelled as Reformation marks a unique and unprecedented period in the eruption of the sacred word in human history. Whoever translated and edited the Bible in the vernacular was wholeheartedly committed to show the dramatic event of how the letter or the word was becoming Gospel while reading it. Both Luther and Tyndale were keen on demonstrating that the "good word" of the Gospel is *promissio* or promise. With this revolutionary insight they were indeed forerunners of modern speech act theory. Luther emphasized the performative nature of biblical statements such as "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). The German theologian Oswald Bayer notes that Luther discovered the performative word in baptism, in the Lord's supper, in the Christmas story, in the Easter story as well as in several other biblical passages. In statements like "Ego Te absolvo" ("I absolve you!") Luther recognized the speech act, "the accomplishing word," as he called it; the *Verbum efficax*, which frees, establishes communication, and gives confidence all at the same time (BAYER 50–58). According to Bayer Luther's great hermeneutical discovery was that the philosophical sign was the mark of something absent while the theological sign was the mark of something present (ibid. 52).

Anthony C. Thisleton recognized the same attitude in Tyndale's *Pathway into the Holy Scripture*:

[he] saw much of the importance and authority of Scripture to lie in its capacity to perform valid and effective linguistic activities... Indeed within a dozen pages, Tyndale specifies no less than eighteen distinct speech acts as linguistic activities which Scripture performs: it promises, names, appoints, declares, gives, condemns, curses, binds, kills, drives to despair, delivers, forbids, ministers to life, wounds, blesses, heals, cures, and wakes." (THISLETON 117–118)

Reformers were aware that the nature of the biblical word is neither "objective" (as for modern fundamentalists) nor subjective (as for modern liberals) but ultimately dramatic as it performs the divine scenario of redemption. Moreover, the "script" (Scripture) also waits to be fulfilled or performed by the believers. Only most recently, the so-called "theological interpretation of Scripture" (K. Vanhoozer, F. Watson, R. Hays et al.) recognized the "theodramatic" nature of the word at its interpretation which considers hermeneutics as the art of discerning the divine discourse at work. "Scripture not only depicts God's speech and action, but is itself a result of these same divine communicative initiatives. Scripture serves the theodrama by taking on the servant form of human language and literature." (Vanhoozer 2006: 74. See also VANHOOZER 2005).

#### METAPHORS OF THE WORD AND SCRIPTURE

Metaphor is a statement of identity. A new, cognitive linguistic view of metaphor was proposed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) which was summarized by the Hungarian cognitive linguist Zoltán Kövecses as follows:

metaphor is property of concepts, and not of words; (2) the function of metaphor is to better understand certain concepts, and not just artistic or esthetic purpose; (3) metaphor is often *not* based on similarity; (4) metaphor is effortlessly used in everyday life by ordinary people, not just by special talented people; and (5) metaphor, far from being a superfluous though pleasing linguistic ornament, is an inevitable process of human thought and reasoning." (KÖVECSES x)

It is commonplace that the Bible abounds in metaphors. In the history of hermeneutics Origen (184–254) ridiculed the absurdity of the literal sense; church fathers like St. Augustine (354–430) were intensively aware of various tropes of language in the Bible (*De Doctrina* III.1). Bede the Venerable (673–735) discussed metaphor among several other tropes in his *De schematibus et tropis*. During the time of the Reformation, reformers of humanist leanings and of rhetorical training (Erasmus, Melancthon) were more aware of the metaphorical nature of language than theological reformers like Luther. Among the “gnosis-Lutherans” Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520–1575) published his monumental *Clavis Scripturae* where he also discussed metaphor in the chapter “De tropis et schematibus sacrarum literarum.”

In English-speaking hermeneutics a unique work on biblical metaphors was produced by Baptist minister Benjamin Keach (1640–1704) entitled *Tropologia, a Key to Open Scripture Metaphors*, first published in 1682. The first part of this monumental *Tropologia* is a partial translation of Solomon Glassius’ *Philologia Sacra*. The book was meant to provide an aid for preachers. “Having a particular inclination to study the nature of Metaphors, Tropes and Figures, principally for the education of my hearers, I betook myself to preach upon some Metaphors.” (KEACH viii)

Among the hundreds of Scriptural metaphors, several are about the word of God. In most cases, word-of-God metaphors graphically envisage the speech act aspect of the metaphor. Here are some classic examples of similes and word-of-God metaphors: “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Isa. 55:10–11).<sup>1</sup> “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Eph. 6:16–17) “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12)

One may argue that while the last two biblical passages are evident metaphors, my first example is more of a simile than a metaphor, as it compares the function of the word of God to the function of the rain. However, this example,

on the one hand, supports the above definition that metaphors have to do more with concepts than with words (the function of the word is the function of the rain); on the other hand, it illustrates my point that biblical metaphors frequently function as speech acts.

Benjamin Keach devotes some seventy pages to the word-of-God metaphors: the word of God compared to light; the word of God compared to a net; the word of God compared to gold; the word of God compared to milk; the word of God compared to meat; the word of God compared to honey; the word of God compared to fire; the word of God compared to a hammer; the word of God compared to the sword of the spirit; the word of God compared to heaven; the word of God compared to a glass (mirror); professing the Gospel compared to a plough; the word of God compared to seed; the word of God compared to a rain; the word of God compared to the dew of heaven; the gospel compared to a treasure. Under these rubrics Keach first describes some general aspects of the nature of the metaphor under discussion, shows the biblical parallel, sometimes the disparity, and occasionally draws some inferences.

So far, we have seen that studying prefaces is a promising enterprise and prefaces to biblical translations creatively expand and multiply biblical metaphors of the word of God that functioned as speech acts in the biblical texts themselves. This original biblical dynamism is transferred into the texts of the prefaces that aim to move and persuade the readers to be subjected to the authority of the sacred word by the converting and renewing of their minds.

#### APPLICATION TO 16<sup>TH</sup>-CENTURY PREFACES

In the second part of my paper, I propose to read the prefaces of some 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century English Bible translations with the purpose of finding and identifying word-of-God metaphors and observing how they function as speech acts in exhorting the readers: how they ultimately teach the art of reading Scripture.

#### Tyndale's Prefaces (1525, 1526, 1530, 1534)

The first 16<sup>th</sup>-century preface is the prologue to the Cologne-fragment by William Tyndale (1494–1536) from 1525 (later on published as *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*). This work is mainly a translation of Luther's *Vorrede* from 1522, and thus it was the first English Lutheran document to reach England (DANIELL 1994: 119). Strangely enough, terms such as “the word of God” or “God's word”

<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the Bible in this paper are from the KJB.

do not appear in this unique hermeneutical treatise. Strictly speaking, therefore, we cannot recognize word-of-God metaphors in the Prologue. Tyndale does use, however, the terms "God's law" and "God's evangelion," following Luther's famous dichotomy of the law and the gospel:

Evangelion (that we call the gospel) is a Greek word; and signifeth good, merry, glad, and joyful tidings, that maketh a man's heart glad, and maketh him sing, dance, and leap for joy. ... the Evangelion of God (which we call Gospel; and the New Testament) joyful tidings; and as some say, a good hearing published by the apostles throughout all the world, of Christ the right David how that he hath fought with sin, with death, and the devil, and overcome them (TYNDALE 1848: 8).

Speech act, as Thistleton noted, can be recognized frequently when Tyndale describes the act of the word. Here is a graphic metaphorical example for the illustration of the law-and-gospel dialectics. Mark the metaphor of the "salve" and the gospel being a "gentle pastor."

When a preacher preacheth the law, he bindeth all consciences; and when he preacheth the gospel, he looseth them again. These two salves (I mean the law and the gospel) useth God and his preacher, to heal and cure sinners withal. The law driveth out the disease and maketh it appear, and is a sharp salve, and a fretting corosy, and killeth the dead flesh, and looseth and draweth the sores out by the roots, and all corruption. It pulleth from a man the trust and confidence that he hath in himself, and in his own works... It killeth him, sendeth him down to hell, and bringeth him to utter desperation, and prepareth the way of the Lord.... Then cometh the evangelion, a more gentle pastor, which suppleth and suageth the wounds of the conscience, and bringeth health. It bringeth the Spirit of God; which looseth the bonds of Satan, and coupleth us to God and his will, through strong faith and fervent love, with bonds too strong for the devil, the world, or any creature to loose them (ibid. 20-21).

The next document of Tyndale's hermeneutics is the concise "To the Reader" passage added to the octavo 1526 Worms New Testament, the first complete English NT edition in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The exhortation begins with warning the reader to come to Scripture "with a pure mind" and "with a single eye." Here is speech act at work, again. The promises are seen as synonyms for the gospel:

Note the difference of the law and of the gospel. The one asketh and requireth, the other pardoneth and forgiveth. The one threateneth, and the other promiseth all good things to them that set their trust in Christ only (TYNDALE 1849: 389).

In his 1530 prologue to the Book of Jonas as well as in his commentary on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount Tyndale uses the Erasmusian metaphor of "the well of Abraham" for Scripture which was "stopped" by the envious Philistines (i.e. Catholics) who filled them up with the earth of their tradition. Tyndale's Scripture-metaphor with the outside "bark" and the inside "marrow" is again the evocation of the familiar Lutheran dichotomy, but this time he adds even a third layer.

The scripture hath a body without, and within a soul, spirit and life. It hath without a bark, a shell, and as it were an hard bone, for the fleshly-minded to gnaw upon: and within it hath pith, kernel, marrow, and all sweetness for God's elect, which he hath chosen to give them his Spirit, and to write his law, and the faith of his Son, in their hearts. The scripture containeth three things in it: first, the law, to condemn all flesh; secondarily, the gospel, that is to say, promises of mercy ... and thirdly, the stories and lives of those scholars, both what chances befell them, and also by what means their schoolmaster taught them and made them perfect, and how he tried the true from the false (ibid. 449).

In the prologue to his revised NT translation in 1534, Tyndale identifies the word of God with the kingdom of heaven which had been locked up by the sophistry of the Papists. He promises to offer his brethren their due "food" which is meant even for the weaker stomachs:

the kingdom of heaven, which is the scripture and word of God, may be so locked up, that he which readeth or heareth it, cannot understand it: as Christ testifieth how that the scribes and Pharisees had so shut it up (Matt. 23) and had taken away the key of knowledge (Luke 11) [...] that they can understand no sentence of the scripture unto their salvation... Therefore (that I might be found faithful to my father and Lord in distributing unto my brethren and fellows of one faith, their due and necessary food: so dressing it and seasoning it, that the weak stomachs may receive it also, and be the better for it). ("W. T. Unto the Reader," *Tyndale's New Testament*, 3)

For Tyndale, the authentic reading of Scripture is "reading unto salvation." However, Scripture reading is not without risk: Tyndale is well aware of the danger that Scripture can also be read unto one's damnation. This is due to the nature of God's word:



For Coverdale, the word of God has a purifying power; it acts in so far as it drives away lies and deceit:

the word of God is the only truth that driveth awaye all lies, and discloseth all Jugling and deceit, therefore is our Balaam of Rome so loathe that the scripture should be known in the mother toung...if the clear Son of God's word come once to the heat of the day, it shall drive away all the foul mist of his devilish doctrines.

### Cranmer's Preface (the 1540 edition of the 1539 The Great Bible by Coverdale)

Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556), Archbishop of Canterbury, the architect of the *via media* of the Anglican Church, persuaded Henry VIII to commission an authorized English version of the Bible. Coverdale presented a revision of the earlier "Matthew's Bible," and this new version was first published in 1539. The second edition bore a preface by Cranmer and was later also included in the Bishops' Bible (cf. ELLIOTT).

This celebrated preface is not only a passionate exhortation to Bible reading, but a carefully woven rhetorical masterpiece as well. Right at the beginning Cranmer speaks about two sorts of people:

For truly some there are that be too slow and need the spur, some other seem too quick, and need more of the bridle... In the former sort be all they that refuse to read or to hear read the scripture in the vulgar tongue; much worse, they that also let or discourage the other from the reading or hearing thereof. In the latter sort be they which by their inordinate reading, indiscrete speaking, contentious disputing, or otherwise by their licentious living, slander and hinder the word of God most of all other, whereof they would seem to be greatest furtherers. These two sorts, albeit they be most far unlike the one to the other, yet they both deserve in effect like reproach (CRANMER n. p.)

Cranmer's threefold metaphor-cluster sounds as follows:

For the word of God is light: *Lucerna pedibus meis, verbum tuum.* (See Ps. 119) *Thy word is a lantern unto my feet.* It is food: *Non in solo pane vivit homo, sed in omni verbo dei.* (See Matt. 4) *Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word of God.* It is fire: *Ignem veni mittere in tertiam, & quid volo nisi vt ardeat?* (See Luke 12) *I am come to send fire on the earth, and what is my desire but that it be kindled?* (Ibid.)

For the nature of God's word is, that whosoever read it or hear it reasoned and disputed before him, it will begin immediately to make him every day better and better, till he be grown into a perfect man in the knowledge of Christ and love of the law of God: or else make him worse and worse, till he be hardened that he openly resist the spirit of God, and then blaspheme, after the ensample of Pharaoh, Coza, Abiram, Balaam, Judas, Simon Magus and such other.

This to be even so, the words of Christ (John 3) do well confirm. This is condemnation saith he, the light is come into the world, but the men loved darkness more than light for their deeds were evil. Behold, when the light of God's word cometh to a man, whether he read it or hear it preached and consenteth still unto his old deeds of ignorance: then beginneth his just damnation immediately, and he is henceforth without excuse: in that he refused such great mercy offered him (ibid. 5).

### Coverdale' Preface (1535)

Miles Coverdale (1487–1569) in his preface to the first complete English Bible in 1535 calls God's word "the mother of faith." In dedicating this translation to Henry VIII, he provides a biblical argument to the apparent contradiction that the King had been conferred the title *defensor fidei* (defender of faith) by the Pope, who was for Coverdale, the enemy of faith. The argument is typological: the blind Bishop of Rome, just like the prophet Baalam in the OT and the high priest Caiaphas in the NT, did not understand that they were prophesying truth against their will.

First, Caiaphas prophesied that it was better to put Christ unto death, than that the people should perish. The bishop of Rome also, not knowing what he prophesied, gave your grace this title: Defender of the faith. The truth of both these prophesies is of the holy ghost (as was Baalam's prophesy) though they that spake them knew not what they said. The truth of Caiaphas' prophesy is, that it was necessary for man's salvation, that Christ by his death should overcome death, and redeem us. (See Numbers chap. 24) And the truth of our Baalam's prophesy is, that your grace in very deed should defend the faith, yea even the true faith of Christ, no dreams, no fables, no heresy, no papistical inventions, but the uncorrupted faith of God's most holy word, which to set forth (praised be the goodness of God, and increase your gracious purpose) your highness with your most honorable council, applieth all his study and endeavor (see Bibliography).

During the time of Edward VI, seven years after Cranmer's preface appeared in the Great Bible, *Certain Sermons and Homilies* were published in 1547. Cranmer was not only the initiator and clerical authority behind the project, but most likely also the author of the first homily: "Exhortation to the Reading of Holy Scripture" (qtd. in BOND 28).

The metaphor that this homily uses right at the beginning is that Scripture is a well (of truth) and meat (for the stomach). The word as the well of life is contrasted with the "the stinking puddles of men's traditions."

And as drynk is pleasaunt to them that be drie, and meat to them that be hungry; so is the readyng, hearyng, searchoyng, and studyng of Holy Scripture, to them that be desirous to knowe God, or them selves, and to do his will. And their stomackes onely do loathe and abhorre the heavenly knowledge and foode of Gods Word, that be so drowned in worldly vanities, that they neither savor God, nor any godliness: for that is the cause why they desire suche vanities, rather than the true knowledge of God. As they that are sicke of an ague, whatsoever they eate and drinke, though it bee never so pleasaunt, yet it is as bitter to them as wormewoode; not for the bitterness of the meat, but for the corrupt and bitter humour that is in their awne tounge and mouth; even so is the swetenesse of Gods Woorde bitter, not of itself, but onely unto them that have their minds corrupted with long custome of synne and love of this world. Therefore, forsakyng the corrupt judgment of carnall men, which care not but for their carcasse, let us reverently heare and reade Holy Scripture, which is the foode of the soule. Let us diligently searche for the welle of life in the boke of the New and Old Testament, and not ronne to the stinkyng podelles of mennes tradicions, devised by mannes imaginacion, for our justificacion and salvacion (ibid. 61).

Scripture is also medicine for the soul:

He that is wounded by the Devil unto death, shall find there medecine, whereby he may be restored agayn unto health (ibid. 62).

The following passage does not only contain a great number of metaphors (meat, lantern, instrument, jewel, honeycomb), but also reflects the dynamic speech act nature of God's word which has "the power to converte." The end of this quotation is the best example how metaphors are made to work, how they are transformed into speech acts.

For the Scripture of God is the heavenly meate of our soules: the hearing and keypyng of it maketh us blessed, sanctifyeth us, and maketh us holy. It converteth our soules; it is a light lanterne to oure fete; it is a sure, a constant and a perpetuall instrument of salvation. It geveth wisdom to the humble and lowly hartes; it comforteth, maketh glad, cheereth, and cherisheth our conscience. It is a more excellent jewell or treasure then any golde or precious stone; it is more sweter than hony or hony combe; it is called the best parte, which Mary did chose, for it hath in it everlasting comforte. The wordes of Holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life: for they be Gods instrument, ordeyned for the same purpose. They have power to converte, through Gods promise; and thei be effectual through Gods assistance; and, beyng received in a faithfull harte, thei have ever an heavenly spirituall woorkyng in them (ibid. 62).

In the second part of the homily, the reader is meekly pushed to commit himself to continual Bible reading ("Reade it humbly, with a meke and lowly harte.") The author acknowledges the occasional difficulties the reader may be exposed to while struggling to appropriate the text. He uses the original and unusual image of the landscape as a metaphor for the uneven nature of the biblical text:

And the Scripture is full, aswel of lowe valleis, plain wais, and easie for every man to use and to walke in, as also of high hilles and mountaines, which few men can ascende unto (ibid. 65).

The final words constitute a straightforward, paternal exhortation to the reader who has by now undoubtedly been convinced to appropriate the sweet message of the speaker's powerful repetitive rhetorics:

Lette us with feare and reverence laie up, in the cheste of our hartes these necessarie and fruitfull lessons. Lette us night and daie muse, and have meditacion and contemplacion in them. Lette us ruminat and, as it wer, chewe the cudde, that we maie have the swete jeuse, spirituall effecte, mary, hony, kinnell, tast, comport, and consolacion of them. Let us stai, quiet, and certifie our consciences with the moste infallible certaintie, truthe, and perpetual assuraunce of them. Let us prai to God, the onely author of these heavenly meditacions, that we maie speake, thynke, beleve, live, and depart hence, accordyng to the wholesome doctrine and verities of them (ibid. 679).

### The Geneva Bible's Epistle and Dedication (1560)

The Geneva Bible in English was chiefly the work of William Whittingham (c. 1524–1579), who had already published his translation of the NT in 1557 with Calvin's Preface. The Geneva Bible contains an epistle "To the Most Virtuous and Noble Queen Elisabeth" written on April 10, 1560.

The OT allusions and the typological imagination of the authors are fascinating. The Queen is first compared to Zerubbabel (Ezra 4), who rebuilt the temple after the Babylonian captivity. The new Queen has to rebuild the monarchy after the five years of captivity under Catholic Mary. Just as Zerubbabel was exposed to political and spiritual threats and dangers, both domestic and foreign, so was Queen Elisabeth, "whome God hath made as our Zerubbabel for the erectyng of this moste excellent Temple, and to plant and maynteyn his holy worde to the aduancement of his glorie," exposed to similar threats in building the new spiritual temple in England. The only way to defend the building of the Lord's Temple from the secular, spiritual, and political enemies is to provide a safe foundation, which is the word of God.

We persuaded our selues that there was no way so expedient and necessarie for the preservation of the one, and destruction of the other, as to present vnto your Maies-  
tie the holy Scriptures faithfully and playnely translated accordyng to the langages wherein they were first written by the holy Gost (TGB ii).

The authors of the epistle here provide a rich metaphorical catalogue for the word of God:

For the word of God is an euident token of Gods (Iohn 14.23.) loue and our assurance of his defence, wheresoeuer it is obediently receuyed: it is the tryall of the (1 Iohn 4.1.) spirits: and as the Prophet saith, (Ierem. 23.29.) It is as a fyre and hammer to breake the stonie heartes of them that resist Gods mercies offered by the preaching of the same. Yea it is (Ebr. 4.12.) sharper then any two edged sworde to examine the very thoughtes and to iudge the affectiones of the heart, and to discouer whatsoeuer lyeth hid vnder hypocrisie and wolde be secret from the face of God and his Church. So that this must be the first fundacion and ground worke, according whereunto the good stones of this building must be framed, and the euill tried out ~ and reiected (TGB iii).

After the Epistle to the Queen, the "brethren" of England, Scotland and Ireland are addressed. The authors praise "the marvelous light" of the Gospel which shines again after "so horrible backsliding and falling away from Christ to Antichrist, from light to darkness, from the living God to dumb and dead idols." Here are the Genevan metaphors for the word of God: "light," "key," "shield," "sword," "school," "glass," "food":

Now forasmuche as thys thing chefely is atteyned by the knollage and practising of the worde of God [which is the light to our paths, the keye of the kyngdome of heauen, our comfote in affliction, our shielde and sworde against Satan, the schoole of all wisdome, the glasse wherein we beholde Gods face, the testimonie of his fauour, and the only foode and nourishment of our soules] (POLLARD 279).

The translators' claim is that by reverently keeping "the propriety of the words," they have cleansed Scripture from human tradition and have managed to restore its true meaning and integrity, as originally intended by the Spirit of God. This is again, a sign of the speech act nature of biblical words.

For God is our witnes that we haue by al meanes indeuored to set forthe the puritie of the worde and right sense of the holy Gost for the edifying of the brethren in faith and charitie (ibid. 281).

Finally, the metaphors "pearl" and "treasure" are used to describe faith stirred up by the word of God:

Therefore, as brethré that are partakers of the same hope and saluatió with vs, we beseeche you, that this riche perle and inestimable treasure may not be offered in wayne but as sent from God to the people of God, for the increase of his kingdome, the comfort of his Church, and discharge of our conscience, whome it hath pleased him to raise vp for this purpose, so you wolde willingly receyue the worde of God, earnestly studie it and in all your life practise it, that you may now appeare in dede to be the people of God, not walking any more according to this worlde, but in the frutes of the Spirit, that God in vs may be fully glorified through Christ Iesus our Lord, who lyueth and reigneth for euer. Amen. (ibid. 283)



### Prologue to The Bishop's Bible (1568, 1572)

The Bishop's Bible was the great scholarly enterprise of Archbishop Thomas Parker (1504–1575) who revised the Great Bible of Miles Coverdale. There were probably some fifteen supervisory bishops responsible for certain sections (PRICE 96). It was meant to counterpart the popular, but controversial Geneva Bible. At the convocation of the Province of Canterbury, which met on April 3, 1571, it was ordered that this Bible should be placed in every cathedral, and that every archbishop, bishop, dean, and other church dignitary should have a copy publicly exposed in the hall or dining room of his home for the use of his servants and strangers. Thomas Cranmer's Prologue with a large initial "C" was reprinted after Parker's exhortations.

Parker's short text does not introduce new metaphors, but, consciously or unconsciously, Calvin's metaphor of God as a painter who, in the old typological tradition, is said to have painted "shadows" in the OT whose "substance" is realized in the NT.

Which legacies of this Testament promised and bequeathed.... which in hope beleeved in Christ to come, who was paynted before them in figures and shadowes, and signified in their old sacramentes ordeined for that time: but now more evidently renewed and exhibited unto us, not in figure, but in deede, not in promise, but in open sight, in feeling, in handling, and touchyng of this eternal lyfe, most manifestly confirmed unto us in Christ his blood in this his newe Testament continued and revived, yet in new sacraments, the better to beare in our remembraunce this his eternal Testament of al joyful felicities. (STRYPE 255)

### The Rheims-Douai New Testament of Gregory Martin in 1582

Gregory Martin (c. 1540–1582), the Roman Catholic priest and scholar, was the primary translator of the Douai-Rheims Bible. His NT appeared just before his death in 1582, and his OT was published posthumously in 1609/10.

What is conspicuous about Martin's prefaces is that the phrase "the word of God" (unlike "God's word" or "God's own word") appears only once in his preface to the NT (*Douai-Rheims New Testament Introduction* n. p.), and there is no occurrence of the expression "the word of God" in his preface to the OT (*Douai-Rheims Old Testament Introduction* n. p.).

However, this does not mean that metaphors are not at work in his prefaces. Among God's mysteries and treasure, the Holy Scripture is said to be "no small

store" in Christ's feeding his family in the NT preface. Scripture here is called "the blessed Book of Christ," which has been abused by heretics.

Martin quotes fathers such as Jerome and St. Augustine on the use of Scripture. St. Augustine said that "the word of God cannot be preached nor certain mysteries uttered to all men alike, but are to be delivered according to the capacity of the hearers." From St. Ambrose, he quotes that the Holy Book of the Scriptures is called "Liber sacerdotalis," the book of priests, and thus one should not cast "the holy to dogs, or pearls to hogs," declaring that "these hogs and dogs to be carnal men and Heretics, that take no good from the Holy Mysteries, but thereby do both hurt themselves and others." Origen has called them "Scripturaru fures," thieves of the Scriptures." Whoever usurp Scripture for their sectarian or heretical purposes are seen as thieves.

Protestants are said to have "disauthorized" Scripture and "the poor deceived people say and sing as though they were God's own Word, being indeed, through such sacrilegious treachery, made the Devil's word." The heretical translators are said to have translated "as freely as if they translated Livy, Vergil, or Terence" with "no religious respect to keep either the majesty or sincere simplicity of that venerable style of Christ's Spirit." Their falsifications are "peddling and adulteration of God's Word (2 Cor. 2:17)."

The 1609 OT preface is much shorter. The argument for translating Scripture into the vulgar tongue is not repeated, but the danger of heretical mistranslation is once again envisaged. "Experience also teacheth that through ignorance, joined often with pride and presumption, many reading Scriptures have erred grossly by misunderstanding God's word. Which though it be most pure in itself, yet the sense being adulterated is as perilous ... as the style corrupted."

In principle, the author does not reject reading Scripture in the vernacular languages, but the ultimate end of reading should be good work.

Holy Scriptures may be rightly used in any tongue to teach, to argue, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect (2 Tim. 3:16–17) and (as St Paul addeth) instructed to every good work (2 Tim. 2:21), when men labor rather to be doers of God's will and word, than readers or hearers only, deceiving themselves (Jas. 1:22).



### The King James Bible (1611)

With our final example, we have arrived at perhaps the most important of biblical prefaces. The rightly celebrated "The Translators to the Reader" of the first, 1611 edition of the KJB is said to have been the work of Miles Smith (1554–1624), who sat on the board of the First Oxford Company. Its "language is sonorous and at times majestic" says Gordon Campbell (CAMPBELL 303). It is indeed a climax in the succession of the rhetorical persuasions of English Protestant and Catholic Bible translators. Its strikes us as an orchestra performance of a grandiose baroque piece. Within the polyphony of the text (marked by carefully chosen subtitles), the lyrical "Praise of the Holy Scriptures" is inserted. This "love song" is carefully woven into the texture of the preface. The translators themselves were affected by the metaphorical world of the sacred word and passionately wanted their audience to be affected, too. Words of love ignite and enkindle the love of words, and the love of words, the words of love. The heat and intensity of this passage calls for longer quotations.

First, the act of reading is illustrated by several NT examples. Jesus and the apostles have been taught how to read. Mark the rhetorical questions:

But now what piety without truth? What truth (what saving truth) without the word of God? What word of God (whereof we may be sure) without the Scripture? The Scriptures we are commanded to search, John 5:39, Isa. 8:20. They are commanded that searched and studied them, Acts 17:11 and 8:28–29. They are reproved that were unskillful in them, or slow to believe them, Matt. 22:29, Luke 24:25. They can make us wise unto salvation, 2 Tim. 3:15 ("The Translators to the Reader," qtd. in DANIELL 2003: 778).

Second, the act of the words or word acts, is demonstrated. The repetitive pattern is meant to draw the readers' attention to perceive how biblical words act:

If we be ignorant, they will instruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heaviness, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us (ibid.).

The nature of the word of God is that it waits to be performed by the reader. This is supported by quotations from the fathers:

Tolle, lege; tolle, lege, "take up and read, take up and read" the Scriptures (for unto them was the direction), it was said unto St. Augustine by a supernatural voice ...

"Whatsoever is in the Scriptures, believe me," saith the same St. Augustine, "is high and divine; there is verily truth, and a doctrine most fit for the refreshing of men's minds, and truly so tempered, that everyone may draw from thence that which is sufficient for him, if he come to draw with a devout and pious mind, as true religion requireth".... Thus St. Augustine. And St. Jerome: Ama scripturas, et amabit te sapientia, etc. "Love the Scriptures, and wisdom will love thee." "... I adore the fulness of the Scripture," saith Tertullian.... The Scriptures then being acknowledged to be so full and so perfect, how can we excuse ourselves of negligence, if we do not study them? of curiosity, if we be not content with them? (Ibid.)

Then a series of far-fetched images and symbols (olive bow, philosopher's stone, cornucopia, the horn of goat, the symbol of plenty, panacea, therapeutic herbs, etc) are enumerated:

Men talk much of eiresionè ["Ειρεσιωνη συκα φερεει, και πιονας ετρους, και μελεν κοτυλη, και ελαιον, etc.": an olive bow wrapped about with wood, whereupon did hang figs, and bread, and honey in a pot, and oil], how many sweet and goodly things it had hanging on it; of the Philosopher's Stone, that it turneth copper into gold; of cornucopia, that it had all things necessary for food in it; of Panaces the herb, that it was good for diseases; of Catholicon the drug, that it is in stead of all purges; of Vulcan's armor, that it was an armor of proof against all thrusts and all blows, etc (ibid. 779).

The argument is the rabbinical *a minimum ad maiore*, "from light to heavy"; if these attributes are valid for earthly things, they must be more valid for heavenly things. The typological pattern of *Steigerung* (see Fabiny), a leaping forward, is mentioned here; it is like a shift of music into a new key that crescendoes to a climax. Scripture is like all that, but, because of its heavenly provenance, much more.

It is not only an armor, but also a whole armory of weapons, both offensive and defensive, whereby we may save ourselves and put the enemy to flight. It is not an herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradise of trees of life, which bring forth fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicine. It is not a pot of manna, or a cruse of oil, which were for memory only, or for a meal's meat or two, but as it were a shower of heavenly bread sufficient for a whole host, be it never so great; and as it were a whole cellar full of oil vessels; whereby all our necessities may be provided for, and our debts discharged. In a word, it is a panyard of wholesome food against finewed traditions; a physician's shop ... of preservatives against

poisoned heresies; a pandect of profitable laws against rebellious spirits; a treasury of most costly jewels against beggarly rudiments; finally, a fountain of most pure water springing up unto everlasting life. ("The Translators to the Reader," qtd. in DANIELL 779).

The ultimate explanation of the character of Scripture is rooted in its sacred nature. By yoking together and applying to Scripture these far-fetched images, the authors managed to evoke the feeling of the numinous in the reader. The biblical words are sacred as they come from God, they are sanctified, and thus they sanctify. They are communicated to the heart of the believer by the Holy Spirit. At the end of the passage, the discourse of the preface is transformed into hymnic discourse of the Psalms. It is indeed the "The Praise of the Holy Scripture."

And what marvel? The original thereof being from heaven, not from earth; the Author being God, not man; the Inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the apostles or prophets; the penmen such as were sanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's spirit; the matter, verity, piety, purity, uprightness; the form, God's word, God's testimony, God's oracles, the word of truth, the word of salvation, etc.; the effects, light of understanding, stableness of persuasion, repentance from dead works, newness of life, holiness, peace, joy in the Holy Ghost; lastly, the end and reward of the study thereof, fellowship with the saints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that never shall fade away. Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night (ibid.).

#### CONCLUSIONS

Having read and analyzed more than ten prefaces by seven authors of English biblical translations by from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the question arises: what kind of conclusions can we draw from the metaphor-oriented reading of these prefaces from Tyndale to the King James Version?

It is my hope that I could show that prefaces are significant to the texts they introduce, and thus the studying of prefaces is a worthy enterprise both from a hermeneutical point of view as from a translation theory perspective.

The metaphorical nature of the word of God in Scripture (e.g. Heb. 4:12) seems to have inspired the authors to use metaphorical language in their

prefaces. The dominant metaphors in the prefaces create a metaphorical world into which the reader is invited to enter.

A dominant feature of the biblical word is that it is ultimately action. It does not only signify, it "happens." As they have creative power, biblical words in general, and the word-of-God metaphors in particular, function as word acts.

Among the prefaces surveyed, Tyndale's texts present most conspicuously the word of God as speech acts, though he does not dwell on the richness of biblical metaphors. The cluster of word-of-God metaphors are most graphically presented in Cranmer's Prologue and in the Preface of the King James Version Translators.

Due to their speech act nature, metaphors "work upon" the readers and generally draw them into the biblical texts. They therefore teach us the art of reading Scripture, an exercise worthy of pursuit even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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