Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 4, Translation Theory

The basis of interpretation is a good translation. After establishing the text of the Old and New Testament through textual criticism that we discussed last session, so through the process of textual criticism, out of all the manuscripts and some of them with various variants and different readings, through the process of textual criticism, one works backwards to establish what most likely was the original text, the wording of it. Then based on that, the next part of the process, the next phase of the process of transmission is translation into the language of the modern-day reader.

So again, text criticism establishes from all the manuscript evidence the original text in Hebrew and Greek, and then the next step in the process of transition is translation into modern-day languages. But a number of questions to raise in discussing translation is what makes a good translation? What are the principles that are utilized to produce translation? What are the types of translations available? What translation should I be using? What role does translation play in hermeneutics? And the purpose of this session is not to necessarily defend any one translation, but to introduce you to the philosophy of translation, and again, what role translation plays in hermeneutics and interpretation. We'll also talk a little bit about gender translation, kind of one of the translations in vogue are gender inclusive or gender neutral translations, as they're often called.

We'll talk a little bit about those and the philosophy that lies behind that. But what makes a good translation and what one should I use in interpretation? The first thing is to understand what translation is. Basically, at its most simple form, translation is simply the transference of a message from one language to another.

The original language that one is translating from is usually called the source language. The language that is being translated into, for our purposes, it would be English or whatever language you speak. The modern-day language is what is known as the receptor language.

Then in between, you have the message. Translation, then, is translating a message from a source language, for our purposes, that would be Hebrew and Greek, and translating that message from the source language into the receptor language, which is, for our purposes, the modern-day language that you speak, whether English or whatever other language. And there are a number of theories about how that is done.

Usually, the theories revolve around whether priority is given to the source language or whether priority is given to the receptor language. That is, do I give priority to the Hebrew and Greek text and the form of the text, or do I give priority to the modern-day receptor language, the modern-day language, such as English, that I am translating into. For example, a focus on the source language, the focus on the source text, usually is associated with and results in more literal types of translations.

The goal in this type of translation that focuses on the source language, which again, for our purposes, is Hebrew and Greek, is the goal is usually to reproduce as closely as possible the language and the structure and the form of the original language. Even if at times it sounds awkward and wooden and stilted in the receptor language, the goal, again, is to preserve as closely as possible the form and the structure of the source language, again, Hebrew and Greek. This is often known also as a formal equivalent translation or a formal equivalent philosophy of producing a translation.

Again, it focuses on producing as much as possible the exact form of the source text. In other words, it's willing at times to sacrifice understanding and clarity in the

receptor text in order to preserve as closely as possible the form of, again, the structure of, the wording, the length of the sentences of the source text, the, again, for our purposes, Greek and Hebrew. Example, modern day examples of this might be the NASB, the New American Standard, or the NRSV.

The NAS is a classic example of a more formal equivalent type of translation, a translation that focuses on the source text and the source language. The other kind of competing theory or philosophy of translation focuses not on the source text, but on the receptor text. Usually these types of translations have a more contemporary sound to them when they're read.

The goal of a folk translation that focuses on the receptor text, the goal is to reproduce the message of the source text, even if not the form and structure, at least to produce the message in a way that will be understood by the modern reader or those who are those who are reading in their receptor language. So the focus is more on the receptor text, receptors, and the receptor language. Will the modern day reader for whom I'm producing this translation, will they as accurately and as closely as possible understand the message of the source text? So this translation is quite willing to sacrifice the form and the structure and the exact wording of the form of the source text in order to communicate as clearly as possible in the language of the receptor.

This is often known as a dynamic equivalent type of translation. And again, the goal is to get the modern reader to respond. And I should say that most who follow this philosophy of translation focuses on the receptor language, do not do so with the idea or the intention of abandoning the source text.

The goal is to try to reproduce the meaning as closely as possible, but in a way that will be understood by the receptors and by the receptor language. So the goal is that

modern readers will respond to the text in an equivalent way, in the same way emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually will respond to the text in the same way that those first readers would have responded to the source text. That requires in this philosophy of translation, introducing certain changes.

That is changing it in a way that will be understandable by the majority of contemporary readers so that they'll respond in a similar way. Again, it's to reproduce an equivalent response with the receptors as those who originally read the text. And so it's quite willing to change the structure, the wording, the length of sentences.

It's willing to sacrifice the form and other things in the source text so that the readers will be able to understand it and respond to it in an equivalent way. So they sacrifice form for meaning. One example of a thoroughgoing dynamic equivalent translation is the today's English version, the TEV.

And there are other examples of translations that focus more on the receptor language, a dynamic equivalent. There are also, again, one could quibble over this, but there are all, some would even distinguish from dynamic equivalent translations, go a step further and look at trans or those New and Old Testament texts that could be labeled a paraphrase, such as Eugene Peterson's The Message, or traditionally the Living Bible or the New Living Bible are often placed in this category of a paraphrase. Rather than seeing these as opposite translation theories, it's probably more helpful to place them on ends of a spectrum.

Instead of simply opposite self-contained theories, is place more dynamic equivalent approaches and formal equivalent approaches. Again, dynamic approaches that focus on the receptor language, the modern language, strive for understandability and intelligibility. And those formal equivalent that focus more on the source text,

trying to reproduce the form, instead of seeing them as two opposite opposed translation theories that are kind of sealed off from each other, to see them as standing on opposite ends of the spectrum from more formal to more equivalent.

In fact, I would argue that a completely formal equivalent approach is impossible. That every, as we'll see, every translation is in some respects an interpretation of the biblical text. And so a completely literal translation is, in my opinion, theoretically impossible, and practically impossible as well.

So it's better to see them in ends of a spectrum, translations that tend more to the focus on the source text and that are formally equivalent, and other translations that are tend more towards dynamic equivalence, focusing more on the receptor text, and then a number in between. In my opinion, an example that, although it's usually often considered a dynamic equivalent, but I think an example that tries to balance the two approaches and fall somewhere in between, whether it does so successfully, can be debated, but would be the NIV, especially the 2011 updated version of the NIV, is actually by their own admission an attempt to balance a formal and a dynamic equivalent, maybe a little bit more towards the dynamic side of that spectrum. And again, my purpose is not to defend one of these perspectives or to defend a translation, though I think there is much to be said for dynamic equivalent type translations and what the NIV is doing, but my intent is not to defend a translation as much as to introduce you to the philosophies that lie behind translations, so that you know what's going on and you can identify what kind of translation it is you're dealing with, and then what contribution that might make to the process of hermeneutics and interpretation.

Instead, I simply want to make a number of observations related to translation by way of evaluating translations and understanding what they are and what they do, and your ability to utilize them. First of all, as I've already mentioned, there's no such

thing, in my opinion, there's no such thing as a completely literal translation. And the reason for this is linguistic, because no two languages are identical.

Although languages do overlap, and there are similarities, and that's what makes translation possible. But on the other hand, there's no such thing as a completely literal translation, because no two languages completely overlap. No two languages are identical.

And since this is the case, a strictly literal translation is impossible. I mean, again, even words, words overlap in meaning, they're not completely identical words aren't even spelled the same. Even a word that is in English that is equivalent, perhaps to a Hebrew word has different letters, and even different numbers of letters and are obviously spelled very differently.

And their meanings over only overlap and are usually never completely identical. Languages have different structures. So something that Hebrew or Greek does grammatically, English doesn't or does in a very different way.

And so there's no overlap between languages. So that completely literal translation, in my opinion, is an impossibility. In fact, also, if I were to strive for a rather wooden, I prefer the word wooden to literal, usually, if I were to strive for a completely wooden translation, that is, if Hebrew or Greek has a word or a certain construction, I will reproduce that exactly in English, usually the result is often nonsense.

And again, that's because the two languages don't overlap. Let me give you an example. This is from, this is a rather wooden word for word, following the order of words in the Greek text, and following the grammatical structure, construction in the Greek text with the closest equivalent in English.

Here's a rather wooden translation of Colossians chapter three, and verse 17. And all what anything if you do in word or in work, all in name of Lord Jesus. Now some of that you picked up on, and maybe you caught the general sense of the whole thing.

But much of it is rather awkward and unintelligible, if I'm to translate it woodenly, which is how I just did. However, to give just one example from the NIV, and that's just because it's the translation I have at hand right now, you could use a number of others. But here's how the NIV has handled Colossians chapter three, and verse 17.

It says, and whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, which makes a lot more sense. So you see, it's actually sacrificed a little bit of the strict grammar and wording in order to preserve, I think accurately, the meaning, while still maintaining some of the grammatical structure of the text itself. But the point was to demonstrate if a precise and completely wooden or literal type of translation often miscommunicates or fails to communicate anything to the readers in the receptor language.

Another example, this is from Matthew chapter 13 and verse 4. The parable, well-known parable of the sower, in Matthew's version of it, as spoken by Jesus. In introducing it, a very wooden, almost word-for-word translation, finding the closest formal and literal equivalent in English to the wording and grammar of the Greek text would sound something like this, perhaps, and into the sow him which on the one had fell by the way. And tell me what that means.

Well, the difficulty is because there are a couple of the way that the English words have been combined are unacceptable in English, whereas they may have been in Greek. So, and in the to sow, and to sow meaning to sow seed, and in the to sow him which on the one had hand fell by the way. Now, chapter 13, verse 4, again, this is just one example from the NIV, how that has been clarified.

As he was scattering the seed, or as he was sowing the seed, some fell along the path, which again is an attempt to still follow the order of the Greek text as close as possible, but to use appropriate English constructions that are equivalent to as closely as possible to the Greek ones. So I use this as examples to demonstrate that a literal wooden translation often is not the best, and frequently risks being misunderstood or not understood at all. And furthermore, as I said, a completely literal translation is actually an impossibility because no two languages completely overlap.

Second, the second observation I want to make is that every translation is an interpretation, period. No matter what you hear, and I still hear people saying that certain translation is neutral, and it doesn't interpret, it's not an interpretation, and some translations are discredited because their interpretations were other translations are preferred, because there's not interpretations. The difficulty is, no matter how wooden, even the examples I just read from Matthew 13 and from Colossians 3, no matter how wooden, every translation is an interpretation.

One well-known New Testament scholar that I was talking to told me, some may think this goes too far, but perhaps intentionally overstating, told me that every translation is a commentary on the biblical text in disguise. What he was trying to get, I think, is what we were saying, is that at some degree, every translation is an interpretation. Again, some may interpret more than others, but it's impossible to produce a translation that is not an interpretation of the biblical text.

So, for example, if I'm going to use an English word, I'll just talk about the word level for this example. If I'm going to use an English word, man, to translate the Hebrew word adam, first of all, I have to know what the Hebrew word adam means. That is, I have to interpret it, and I also have to know what the English word man means.

To make sure that that's an appropriate English word to translate adam, I can't use the word tree, or I can't choose any word I want. I have to know what the Hebrew word means, so that I, and then I have to, so that I can find the appropriate English word, and I have to know what that means, so that I can determine that that's an appropriate word to use. That is interpretation, and that's why I say every interpretation, every translation is an interpretation.

Or again, if the Greek text that I'm translating has a certain grammatical construction, I have to interpret that correctly and accurately in order to know what English construction to use, and therefore, I have to interpret and understand the meaning of the English construction to know that it is an accurate and adequate construction to use to represent the Greek. So interpretation, no matter how wooden I want to be, even if I want to be very wooden and use a word for word, I still have to interpret the Greek and Hebrew text and my own language to determine that I'm going to use this word or this construction to translate and represent this meaning and this construction in the Hebrew or Greek text. So again, every translation is an interpretation.

So again, for example, Genesis chapter 1 verse 1, how do I know that the English word heavens, just to use a very simple example, how do I know that this is a good English word, or even an accurate or a bad word to use for interpreting Shemaiah? I have to know the meaning of that word, the Hebrew word in its context, and then I have to know the meaning of the English word heavens to make sure it's a good fit. Or Galatians 5, when Paul contrasts the spirit with the flesh, actually for the Greek word that the flesh is usually used to translate is sarx. But again, I have to know what sarx means.

I can't just randomly use the word flesh, but I have to know what the word sarx means in order to find the appropriate English word. And then again, I have to know the meaning of that word, and know that it is an accurate and suitable word to use in order to translate the Greek word sarx. So every translation is to some degree an interpretation, no matter how literally you're trying to translate or how wouldn't you want to be.

So again, when someone says, I don't like this translation because it's an interpretation, and this is not an interpretation, it's a translation, has probably misunderstood things. Because every translation is inevitably an interpretation of the biblical text. A third thing in thinking in terms of translation is that translations usually give priority to the spoken language over the written.

That is because most translations are meant to be read and heard. You think about it, most people, in other words, translations are not primarily produced for scholars. Most people that read are the person sitting in the worship service, in the pews or the chairs in our churches, in the sanctuary or auditorium on Sunday mornings, or whenever your church meets.

So that most persons are hearing it read, they're hearing it spoken. So most translations are often geared for the hearer. And often what that means is sometimes translations will be geared towards eliminating offensive sounding translations, etc.

For example, a very good example that's probably true at the spoken as well as the written level is the fact that the older King James version would include the word ass when referring to a donkey. That now has been removed because at least in modern day English, to have that word spoken, someone might read it, especially if you're raised with reading the King James version, or if you're raised with kind of biblical

jargon, you might be used to that. But if that word is utilized in a congregation made of modern day hearers, many of them not biblically trained or not used to reading or hearing the Bible, something like that may sound offensive.

And so a lot of translations today are geared towards the spoken over the written, and will often give priority to how something will sound when it's written. Though again, that's perhaps not true of every translation. A fourth thing, a fourth observation to make about translations is that translations, and again, I'm just making observations, not so much evaluating them, but so that you can evaluate what's going on.

The fourth thing is most translations are written to be understood, or translations are written to be understood by the majority of the audience for which they are intended. And that takes into consideration the readership level, the socioeconomic level of the majority of readers for whom it's intended. So for example, just to utilize the NIV again, as an example, is it's aimed at about a fifth or sixth grade reading level, because it determines that the majority of the readers and listeners to that text will be operating at that level.

As opposed, for example, to a translation that might be produced for academics or scholars, it might be operated at a different level. So the translations are meant to be understood, are usually produced, especially dynamic equivalent translations to be understood by the majority of the readers for whom it is produced. Number five, in my opinion though, is translations still must, and many translations still strive, to retain a sense that one is still reading a foreign document.

That is, it's possible to update a translation to such a degree that one feels that one is reading a document that was produced in the 21st century. So for example, when Jerusalem all of a sudden as translator becomes Philadelphia, or Atlanta, Georgia, or

Sacramento, California, or something like that, is updated to become a modern day city, or Babylon is updated to become Las Vegas, or something like that. However much that might gain, it seems to me at times though to, some of those are extreme examples of sacrificing the fact that I'm dealing with a document that is, it was not written in the 21st century.

So while one might strive for a document that is understandable to the receptors, at the same time it still must retain a sense that one is reading a document that was written in a century, two millennia, or more removed from my modern day context and situation. It, to update a text that sounds like it was produced in a 21st century context and culture in time is probably to sacrifice something at the expense of making it sound contemporary. The sixth thing I want to say about translations is regarding just observations about translations, and what they are, and what they do, is that new translations or updating translations are a necessity.

Is there's no such thing as a final translation, or the official final translation of the New World Testament. And the reason for that is not that the Bible changes, although sometimes we may find going back to text criticism, we may find documents or information that will help us produce a more accurate text, at least in a few of the details here and there. But the reason is because not so much the source language changes, but the receptor language changes.

Because modern day languages change, because ass in the 21st century no longer means what it did in the 16th century, or another example, modern day example, is because the word gay in the 21st century does not mean what it did back in the early 20th century or in the 19th century. It's because of that our translations have to change, especially if we're focused on a dynamic equivalent type of translation, or at least we're striving to produce a balance between a translation that captures the original text yet still will communicate accurately to modern day readers. Because

languages change, because modern day languages change, it's necessary to continually update, not so much always in a wide scale manner, but at least to revise and rethink our translations.

In light of all this, I want to spend just a little bit of time talking about gender translations and how that relates to this. And then we'll go back and gather all this information together, talk just a little bit about what role does translation play in the process of hermeneutics and interpretation. But again, to review before we talk about gender translations, again, translations range over scale for more formal equivalent, where the goal of the translation is to reproduce as closely as possible the original form, grammatical structure, wording.

Again, that's impossible to do completely and exhaustively because languages simply don't completely overlap. There's no one-to-one correspondence between the source language and my receptor language. So again, that's why I said these philosophies of translation are to be seen on a sliding scale.

But formal equivalent translations tend to focus more on the source text, reproducing as closely as possible the grammatical structure, the wording, even sometimes sacrificing understandability and clarity in order to capture and retain the structure of the source text. On the other end of the spectrum, we said our dynamic equivalent translations that focus more on understanding the source text, not completely obliterating it or doing away with it, but trying to understand the message it's communicating, but making sure that it's understood in the receptor language by the majority of readers of that text. The goal is to reproduce an equivalent response in the readers of the receptor language as the original readers would have responded intellectually, psychologically, and emotionally to the original text.

Let me say also too that obviously then no translation, because no languages are not identical, no translation can hope to completely capture with exhaustive accuracy the meaning of the original text. Instead, the question is whether the translation is an accurate and adequate reproduction and reflection of the original text. And by the way, just as an aside, at least in my opinion, when one asks the question of how do translations relate to inspiration, is obviously inspiration refers to the original text.

But I would conclude that modern day translations can be labeled as virtually inspired in that they are accurate and adequate if not exhaustively and perfectly, at least substantially and adequately, if they are adequate and accurate reproductions, representations of the original text of the Old New Testament. So we have the scale from more formal equivalent to more dynamic equivalent translations and translations that try to balance. A translation can fall on that scale of more formal and dynamic equivalent types.

One issue that especially dynamic equivalent translations, one issue that it raises is an issue that is kind of in vogue today, and that is the issue of gender translations, what some have called gender neutral translations or gender inclusive translations. I think the word gender inclusive translation is a little more accurate. Gender neutral seems to be suggesting taking gender out altogether, making reference to gender neutral, whereas a gender inclusive suggests that where the biblical text is clearly referring to both male and female, one makes that clear in the receptor language.

So if the Greek and Hebrew languages are clearly referring to male and female, then in my modern day language, that will also be clear in the biblical text. So gender inclusive or gender neutral translations. The issue behind it is this.

In both Greek and Hebrew, and if you've ever studied other languages, especially if you're an English speaker, this is where other languages are often very different than

English. Greek and Hebrew, like a number of other languages, like German and Spanish, etc., will have gender built into the language. That is, certain words will actually be classified as either masculine and feminine.

Some words, again, to take Greek, which is my area of specialty and interest to take Greek, some words will have endings on them or will have a character that is a form that is called masculine. Others will have a form that is feminine. Some words are naturally masculine and feminine.

For example, the word anthropos, or man, is naturally going to be masculine. And the word for woman or female, gune, will naturally be feminine because it's referring to females. But there's other words, there's other words and languages like that that don't seem, maybe in the history they did, but at least for the first century readers, there doesn't seem to be any connection between the words and gender.

For example, the Greek word for sea or ocean is feminine. There doesn't seem to be any connection as if there's some feminine quality in the ocean or sea. There may have been in the history, but I'm convinced most first century readers of Greek would have had no idea why the word that we translate sea or ocean was feminine.

Or the word, the Greek word for word or speech, logos, is masculine. Yet I'm not sure that there's any natural connection between that and the masculine gender. So some words in the languages just arbitrarily seem to be feminine or masculine.

Others seem to have a closer connection. The word for woman, naturally, or daughter, naturally is going to be feminine. The word for husband or man or male is naturally going to have a masculine form or masculine endings to them.

And again, if you've studied a language that has gender, most, again with Greek and Hebrew, certain words are, they're either masculine or feminine. That's sometimes

just the way they did it. The difficulty is in a language like English, at least, that doesn't have gender in the language, gender endings that are masculine or feminine, or forms of words that are masculine or feminine, that can be tricky translating from one language that does that to another.

This gets us to the heart of the problem. Sometimes Greek and Hebrew could, Greek and Hebrew could use a masculine word, a word with a masculine form, and use it to refer to both males and females. The question is, when that happens, even though Greek and Hebrew use a masculine form, like he or man, especially if it's using the word man, and it's clearly referring to all of humanity, males and females, is it appropriate to do that in the receptor language? Again, I'll use the example from English translation.

That is, if Greek or Hebrew uses a masculine pronoun that could be translated he or him or something like that, is it appropriate to use he or him in an English translation? Or if the Hebrew or Greek uses a word that we usually translate man, is it appropriate to use the word man in the English translation? Or the question is, if Hebrew and Greek are using a masculine term that clearly refers to both male and female, in English should we make that more clear? That is, if in English, if I use the word he or him or man, when the biblical text is clearly referring to both male and female, even though they've used masculine language, if I use masculine language, will I be misunderstood in translating it that way? If I use the word man, will the majority of female readers think that they're excluded or misunderstand the text, thinking that it's only referring to men? If I use the word him or he, when the biblical text is clearly referring to male and female, will I be misunderstood? Will I lead readers to think that only males are being referred to and excluding females? Not everyone agrees on that question, but I think more and more are starting to agree that we need to at least think about how we translate masculine language. Again, in Greek and Hebrew, the Greek word for man, anthropos, could be used to refer to

men and a male, but it also could be used to refer to humanity, referring to all people, men, males, and females. In English, if I use the word man to translate anthropos, not when anthropos is being used of males and men, but when it's being used to refer to females and males, all of humanity, if I use the word man in those kind of contexts, will I be misunderstood? Or should I use another word in the English translation to capture the fact that it refers to both male and female? So sometimes you will find gender-inclusive translations when anthropos in Greek, the word that we often translate man in English, when anthropos refers to both males and females, when it might be more appropriate, and you'll find some English translations using the word people instead of man.

By using the word people, then, it just makes clear to the modern reader that the Greek and Hebrew were referring to both males and females. Where, if I use the word man, every time anthropos occurred, even when it meant it was referring to male and female, if I use the word man in English, will I cause misunderstanding? Will I cause some to think that only men are being referred to? Or again, the same with he and she. If Hebrew and Greek use pronouns that are masculine, that we would translate he and him in English, but it's clearly referring to male and female, then is it legitimate in English to translate it in a way that makes that clear? It all depends on whether, at least one of the main issues, there's other issues involved, but one of the main issues is it depends on whether English now uses men or man and he or him only to refer to males and never to females.

Some would argue that that's the case, and therefore, we need to be careful that when the Old Testament clearly refers to men and women, both, we need to make that clear in our English translation so that it will not be understood. So the question is, again, should we avoid misunderstanding? Should we try to reproduce the exact form? Or there may be other reasons for preserving the masculine language in Greek and Hebrew. Or should we strive for understanding and communicating accurately

and change the masculine language in English to make sure that the readers will be clear that females are included as well.

So sometimes him and he are turned into they. You could put he slash she, but that kind of gets awkward over long periods of text. But often, you'll find him and he turn to they or them or something like that in English translations.

To make clear that it's not excluded to males. Now, let me say, let me make clear that at least for most evangelicals, this is not an issue of pushing some feminist agenda that is trying to make the entire Bible feminine sounding and feminine inclusive or gender neutral. But instead, the issue is, if the Old and New Testament texts clearly intend to include male and female, then why not make that clear in the English translation? But on the other hand, those that follow this type of translation would admit, if males are intended, if only men are then that needs to be left intact in the translation.

So it's not wherever you find masculine language in the Old New Testament, change it to become neutral or inclusive. That's not the issue. The issue is, if there's masculine language in the Greek and Hebrew, but it's clearly in the context, it's clearly intending a reference to male and female, then that should be made clear in the New and Old Testament text.

So again, things like changing pronouns that are usually translated to he and him, to them or they. Changing the word man to person or people. Again, when it's clearly referring to both genders.

Changing the word son, a word translated son, to sons and daughters, perhaps, or children. Again, only when the word son clearly in the context is intending to include children of both genders, then the change is made. But if the word son in the context

clearly is referring only to sons of the male gender, then that needs to be kept intact and made clear that that's what is being referred to.

So again, you see the issue is often one of meaning. If the masculine language in the Hebrew and Greek clearly refers to males, then that needs to be made clear and retained in English translation. If the masculine language is referring to males and females, then gender inclusive language changes in the receptor text, communicates in a way to make that clear by using languages as gender inclusive.

Again, it needs to be said that this is, at least for most evangelicals, this is not an attempt to push a feminist agenda or tamper with the biblical text. But it's a call for clarity and accuracy according to most who advocate gender neutral translations and a call for increased understanding. It's interesting too that most of the supporters that I know who argue for gender neutral translations are actually not egalitarians when it comes to the issue of women in ministry, whether women should have identical roles and functions as ordained pastors and ministers in the church.

It's interesting that a lot of them are not egalitarians, but many are more hierarchical or complementarians. That is, they would see a distinction between the role of male and female. And some of them are the most ardent supporters of gender inclusive translations.

Some, on the opposite end, some would interestingly say, but the New Testament uses the word man, for example. This is one I often hear. The New Testament uses the word man, so English has to use the same.

No, the New Testament doesn't use the word man. The New Testament uses the word, for example, anthropos, a Greek word. The question again is what is meant by

that word? If what is meant by that word is male or man, then that's the word we need to use in English.

If what is meant by that is human beings, both male and female, then maybe people or peoples or another word would more accurately capture the meaning. To give you a couple of examples, and again, I don't, I'm not using these examples to support either of these or argue for the correctness. I'm just using examples that are often pointed to, to demonstrate what is at stake.

So these are, I'm not arguing for the correctness of these examples or necessarily that you'll buy into them, though I think they're good examples and reflections of what's going on. For example, in the Old Testament, in Psalm chapter one, this is the NIV version, blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. A more gender neutral translation, and interestingly, this was the NIV, this was the original NIV, blessed is the man.

The new 2011 version of the NIV says blessed is the one, because they think, I guess their rationale is that the, this is not just addressed to men, but this is addressed to anyone that falls within this category. And so they've, they've changed it to make this clear. Instead of blessed is the man, which presumably the committee thought that some might read this to be restricted to males, in order to make it clear that they think it's referring to male and female, instead of translating man, they've translated up blessed is the one to be more inclusive.

Another interesting example comes from Hebrews chapter two and verse six. And again, this is another one that could be debated, but I only use these translations as an example of how a gender neutral translation works and some of the questions that is trying to ask. In Hebrews chapter two, Hebrews chapter two is the author is

exalting or extolling the son Jesus Christ as the ultimate and climactic mode of God's revelation, the climactic revelation of God to his people.

As the author says in chapter one, in these last days, God has spoken in his son. And the rest of chapters one and two go on to exalt the son, especially to show that the son is superior over the angels. The reason I think he does that is because the angels would have been associated with the old covenant and the giving of the Mosaic law.

And so by showing that Jesus is superior to the angels, the author can show Jesus is superior to the old covenant means of revelation, because it's the climax, it's the fulfillment of that. And one of the ways he does that in chapter two, and verse six, I'll back up and read five, the author says, is it not to angels that God has subject the world to come about which we were speaking, but there is a place where someone has said, and that's kind of an interesting way for introducing an Old Testament quote, but the author of Hebrews does that frequently. But what comes next is an Old Testament quotation.

And again, I'm reading from the original NIV. What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him, which is a quotation from Psalm chapter eight. And so I won't go back and read Psalm chapter eight.

But this is the author quoting from Psalm chapter eight. Psalm chapter eight is, is a sort of the the psalmist praise for the climax of God's creative activity in human beings. It's sort of a poetic praise and response to the creation narrative from Genesis one and two.

But now interestingly, the author of Hebrews chapter two applies it to Jesus Christ. And so again, the original NIV says, just using this as an example, you could find other

translations that would translate it similarly. But again, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him.

And I want you to notice that masculine language. What is man that you care for him? What is the son of man that you are mindful of him? Notice the masculine language. This, however, is this is the translation from the new revised standard version, the NRSV.

What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals that you care for them? Notice the change from man to human beings, and son of man to mortals, and the him to them. Now, at first glance, this could be seen as a distortion of the local text, and that the translators, the NRSV have tried to tamper with the text or promote an agenda or be more gender friendly and neutral, but therefore have distorted it. Furthermore, some, especially if you're attuned to reading the Gospels, where son of man is the most frequent title that Jesus uses to refer to himself, one could be rather upset with and conclude that this is an illegitimate translation.

So it's important to look at the context to determine why the author or why the translators of NRSV have done it this way. Why have they substituted human beings for man? Why have they substituted mortals for son of man from the translation like the NRSV? The main issue is, in Hebrews chapter two, the author of Hebrews seems to be demonstrating that Jesus Christ is the representative of all humanity. If you read the rest of chapter two, Jesus, the emphasis is not on Jesus maleness, that he's a man, but the emphasis is he's a human being who represents all of humanity, male and female.

Furthermore, I would suspect that the translators of the NRSV have interpreted Psalm 8 in the same way as God's extolling God's creation, not of Adam, of males, but of humanity. So that taking those together, because they've understood Psalm 8

to be praising God's creation of humanity, and because Jesus in Hebrews 2 is representing all of creation, all of humanity, therefore, they've made that clear by changing what is man, what is humanity, human beings, as the pinnacle of God's creation that now Jesus represents. And what is the son of man? What are mortals? Jesus now takes weakened mortal human beings, the pinnacle of God's creation, and now representing all of humanity, he brings them to their intended destiny.

He's the author and finisher of our faith. What humanity failed to achieve, now Jesus Christ achieves by bringing them to their true goal and intention. So therefore, the NRSV has made that clear that Jesus is not just representing males.

The focus in Hebrews is not Jesus as a man, as a male. The focus is on Jesus representing all of humanity and fulfilling Psalm 8 as extolling human beings as the pinnacle of God's creation, but they failed to achieve what God intended. But now Jesus Christ, the human being, does achieve God's intention for humanity.

Therefore, texts like the NRSV has made that clear by using more inclusive language. In the next session, we will wrap up our discussion of gender-neutral translations, and we'll also talk a little bit about what role does translation play in interpretation? What translation should you use in hermeneutics and interpretation, or is there a correct one, and what role should they play?