

Step Five: Translation

The fifth step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the translation of the best attested texts of the Old and New Testaments into the native or common language of every nation to which the Scriptures come. Here we must ask the question, "Can the best attested text of Scripture be translated with such accuracy that we can confidently call the resultant version 'The Word of God'?" To this question we must respond by pointing out two facts. First, in a number of places the New Testament writers appear to quote from the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. They quote it as Scripture and as carrying with it all the authority of the Word of God. Second, we have a number of translations in our possession, some of which are more accurate and some less accurate, but all of which are the Word of God and all of which are characterized by the quality of "inspiredness." At the present time the three leading contenders for the title of the English "Textus Receptus" are the King James or Authorized Version, the New American Standard Bible, and the New International Version. Of course, I am speaking of favored versions among evangelicals, not among liberals, Roman Catholics, Jews or cultists; and I am speaking only of English-language versions. There are many other English versions, including the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, the Living Bible, Today's English Version (or the Good News Bible), J. B. Phillips' translation, the Jerusalem Bible, and a host of others, including Douay, Goodspeed, Moffatt, and the Confraternity Edition. To some degree, all of these versions retain the quality of "inspiredness." Nevertheless I believe that a distinction should be made between essentially trustworthy translations and those which are essentially untrustworthy; the difference being that an essentially trustworthy translation is one which, with confidence, one could commend almost indiscriminately, whereas an essentially untrustworthy translation is one which one could not commend with confidence, or about which one would have strong reservations. Of course, the saving feature about this step is that there are many Christians who have a working proficiency in the original languages of Scripture, who can check the accuracy of any or all of these translations, and can perhaps even more closely approximate the meaning of the best attested text of Scripture.

Step Six: Interpretation

The sixth step in the transmission of God's Word is that of the interpretation