

Point of view of the Bible Society and Bible translators

1.0 Spacing
14 Pages

On 2 May 2012, I met with rev Gerrit Kritzinger (head executive of the Bible Society) and prof Bernard Combrink (translation project leader of the new Afrikaans Bible) for a talk at Bible House in Kempton Park. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the discord about the use of upper case/lower case in the Messianic prophecies of the Bible translation (to be published in 2016 or afterwards). This conversation also provided me with the opportunity to gain more insight in their thinking.

During the conversation prof Combrink remarked that every Book of the Bible, or section thereof, had to be approved and finalised by the steering committee. This committee comprises 13 members and all of those support the use of lower case letters. Rev Kritzinger also supports the use of lower case.

In a nutshell...

Since 2006 work has proceeded on the new Afrikaans Bible translation to be published in 2016 or later. The Bible Society and Bible translators assumed a position in favour of writing the Names of Christ in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament in lower case letters. **This means that His Names, for example *God, Lord, Son (of God), King, Priest, Prophet and Messiah*, will be written in lower case.** As example the word *Prophet* in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 will now be written as *prophet* (lower case *p*). Also in Psalm 45:6, 7 the word *God* can now be replaced by the words *exalted being* (in lower case). This already happened in the translation of 1983. (However compare Acts 3:22, 23; 7:37 and Hebrews 1:8, 9.)

On the website of the Bible Society www.nuwekerkbybel.co.za a document appears where questions the public may perhaps have, are answered. On their website this answer is titled: **Why is alleged that Christ would be translated out of the Old Testament in this proposed translation?** [Translated]

In the following document the answer of the Bible Society is analysed. Here it is affirmed:

- ◆ that in many respects the Bible Society presents a wrong picture to the public, and
- ◆ that there is only one style to do justice to the message of the Bible, and that is to write the Names of Christ and the pronouns referring to Him in **upper case letters**.

The fact is the Bible Society and the Bible translators often present a wrong picture to the public in their document. Let us consider a few allegations made in the document:

1. The ‘Statevertaling’ [The Dutch Authorized Version]

Allegation: The well-known Dutch ‘Statevertaling’ used no upper case in the Messianic verses of the Old Testament.

Reply:

Fact is the 'Statevertaling' used lower case not only in the Messianic prophecies. It is evident from the following: All the pronouns referring to God (the Father and the Trinity), are written in upper case (for example *Ik, Mij, Hij* and *Hem*) in both the Old and the New Testaments. But: All the pronouns referring to Christ are written in lower case in the Old and the New Testaments (for example *ik, mij, hij* and *hem*). This proves a severe weakness in the 'Statevertaling' by not putting the emphasis on Christ's Divinity in these pronouns of this translation. Use of lower case in Isaiah 53 of the 'Statevertaling' must be understood in this light.

The word *knecht* (servant) also appears in lower case in Isaiah 42:1 as well as in the quotation of this verse in Matthew 12:18 (in the 1900 edition of the 'Statebybel' and in the reprint thereof in 1919).

2. German and English Bibles

Allegation: Even in the (German) translation by Martin Luther and the reviewed editions thereof, upper case is not used with pronouns referring to the 'servant' of Isaiah 53. The same applies mainly to English translations. (Then a list of ten English Bibles using lower case follows.)

Reply:

Once more a misrepresentation is produced to the public. In the Luther translation, as well as in the relevant English translations, all the pronouns referring to God are written in lower case in the Old and the New Testaments. From this we cannot conclude that in these translations lower case is used only in the Messianic prophecies, as here lower case appears everywhere.

However, what happens to the 1983 and the new (2016) Afrikaans translations? Here lower case is used in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament but upper case in quotations of these verses in the New Testament. This means linguistic rules are violated in that quotations (in the New Testament) do not agree with the quoted verses (in the Old Testament).

Fact is though: That which is demonstrated by this style is a symptom of unbelief. This proves that the Bible translators cannot believe that God had the power and authority to give such rich promises in the Messianic prophecies.

A Bible translation in which the promises (in the Old Testament) are in lower case, but the fulfilment (in the New Testament) in upper case is illogical and unacceptable.

NOTE:

In another random text the Bible Society examined one verse, namely Isaiah 53:4, in 38 English Bible translations and found only seven of those used upper case.

On this we comment as follows:

Isaiah 53:4 reads as follows (NKJV): *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted.*

In this verse only pronouns appear which refer to Christ (namely *He* and *Him*). The Bible Society has as yet not made a further study of verses where the Names of Christ occur in the Messianic prophecies in English Bibles. I examined all 38 Bible translations to which he referred, in order to determine in how many of those the Names of Christ are written in lower case in the

Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. (Compare the documents: *English and Latin Bibles analysed*, and the accompanying *ANNEXURE*, appearing on the website www.2016vertaling.co.za .)

The examination concluded that the majority of those translations wrote the Names of Christ in upper case. This proves the Bible Society presents a wrong picture to the public by only referring to the statistics of the use of pronouns. The Bible translators of the new Afrikaans Bible translation are undoubtedly in the wrong by their use of lower case.

Concerning the pronouns: It seems true that the English Bible translations only started using upper case in the twentieth century. But we know that the use of upper case is a blessed practice which came into being. In the idiom and sense of the Afrikaans language the practice of using upper case, also for the pronouns referring to Christ, has had foundation for a century.

By now writing the Names of Christ and pronouns in lower case, it can rightly be interpreted as a symptom of unbelief. The lower case letters which already appeared in the 1983 translation, present themselves as a symptom of unbelief.

3. Is upper case restricted to a few translations?

Allegation: The use of upper case is mainly restricted to a few English translations, the post-1900 ‘Statebybel’ and the 1933/53 Afrikaans translation.

Reply:

That this allegation creates a correct impression is questionable.

The following are examples of two recent translations. In the Portuguese Bible the next words appear in upper case in the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament:

Psalm 2:6, 12: Rei (King), Filho (Son)

Psalm 45:6: o Deus (O God)

Psalm 110:1: meu Senhor (my Lord)

In a French Bible (edition: 1968) these Names appear as follows:

Psalm 45:7, 8: ô Dieu (O God) – for us 45:6, 7

Psalm 110:1: mon Seigneur (my Lord)

The question should rather be turned round, namely: In which Bible translations in Western languages is upper case *not* being used?

It is evident that many theologians involved with the English Bible translations, gradually came to the conclusion that upper case was essential for the Names of Christ in the Old Testament, as well as for the pronouns referring to Him. More so, they even used more upper case in some Bible translations than those used in the 1933/1953 Afrikaans translation.

Even in the 1900 edition (and in the reprint of 1919) of the ‘Statebybel’ more Names of Christ are in upper case than is the case in the 1933/1953 Afrikaans translation. Compare for example the words: *Heilige* (*the Holy One*, Ps 16:10), *Priester* (*Priest*, Ps 110:4), *Leeraar* (*Teacher*, Joel 2:23) and *Heiland* (*Saviour*, Zech 9:9).

4. Should foot-notes be used?

Allegation (1): Every case where the New Testament sees a reference to Christ in a verse or words in the Old Testament, should be marked with a foot-note only, in the Old Testament. It suffices to indicate Messianic verses in the Old Testament with foot-notes.

(My explanation:) The translators of the new Afrikaans Bible are of the opinion that they can write the Names of Christ as well as the pronouns referring to Him, in lower case in the Messianic prophecies. They would then add foot-notes below the relevant passages in the Old Testament. These foot-notes would comprise passages from the New Testament “applying those passages in the Old Testament to Christ.” [Translated]

Reply:

If lower case is used in the Old Testament, as well as foot-notes, it does not indicate that the Old Testament itself contains revelation about the Divinity of Christ. This would imply that the revelation about Christ only became clear much later in the New Testament.

The lower case to be used can imply that Christ had not been God at the time of the Old Testament. Another implication is that the Old Testament does not proclaim Christ and that Christ is therefore not the Message of the Old Testament.

Let us remind the Bible translators about the words of Christ: “*You search the Scriptures (the Old Testament) ...and these are they which testify of Me*” (John 5:39).

Furthermore we can ask the Bible translators how the people in Old Testament times had to believe properly in order to be saved. They had to believe according to the Old Testament teaching regarding Christ. These words of Jesus also applied to them: “*I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6).

Believers of the Old Testament times were saved by believing in the Divinity of the Messiah/Christ. (In the same way we are saved today!) The Old Testamental people had to learn this truth from the Old Testament. They had to believe that the Messiah/Christ Who would be born, was God Himself (Isaiah 9:6), that He, the Sinless One, would die for their sins (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53) and that He had reigned from eternity, and will reign forever, as King (Psalm 2, 45 and 110). These three psalms also deal about the prophecy by the Holy Spirit – and this was (and still is) higher and deeper than was evident (visible) at the stage the psalms were given, for example during the crowning event of an Israelite king.

In the Scriptures the main objective is the revelation given by God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:20, 21).

Foot-notes would infer that the writers of the New Testament later “read Christ into” those passages in the Old Testament. The Old Testament itself thus did not have that meaning.

In this way the translation of the Old Testament with foot-notes remains unbiblical.

The appropriate way is to rather have both upper case and foot-notes.

Allegation (2): The ‘Statevertaling’ does not use upper case in the Messianic prophecies, but indicates below the text in foot-notes, the New Testament references.

Reply:

The situation of the relevant rulers who commissioned the translation of the Bible into Dutch, as well as the theologians who had to do the translation, might clarify this. Initially they could have considered that as about one half of the page was devoted to explanatory comments, that should provide sufficient space to explain how Christ was evident in the passages concerned.

As the side notations disappeared from the ‘Statevertaling’ in due course, many verse references remained which referred readers to the New Testament verses. These New Testament references appear straight after the words of the texts (in the Old Testament) and not at the bottom of the page, thus as foot-notes, in the Old Testament.

In the 1900 edition of the ‘Statebybel’ many New Testament text references appeared at the end of the words in the verses (in the Old Testament). This function was replaced in the 1953 Afrikaans Bible by placing a column with text references down the centre of every page. This method is more thoroughgoing and as good or even better than foot-notes.

Regarding text references, the use of foot-notes might provide nothing more than do the columns of text references in the 1953 Afrikaans Bible.

5. What is the “primary meaning” of the Old Testament?

Allegation: The New Testament writers undoubtedly saw a hidden or deeper meaning in some passages of the Old Testament, besides the ordinary (or primary) meaning, which they then interpreted as referring to Christ and what He would do.

A translation presenting only the New Testament meaning is not a faithful rendering of the Old Testament source text. And the translators and the Bible Society do emphatically not want to deviate from that (namely that it should be a faithful rendering of the source).

And: If the ‘hidden’ or ‘deeper’ meaning should all be indicated by upper case, the meaning of the Old Testament context would be relegated to the background.

(My explanation): The writer(s) of the Bible Society document refer to the term ‘primary meaning’ which would appear to be found in the Hebrew text a number of times. It is also defined as the ‘obvious meaning of a text in the Old Testament’. However, Christ is not part of this primary, or ordinary meaning (according to the Bible Society and the Bible translators).

Reply:

If we were dealing with a story book, we could have mentioned an ‘ordinary’ or ‘primary’ meaning, where Christ could not be seen. But here we are dealing with Scripture. In the Scriptures everything revolves around the revelation of God. A Bible translation should convey this revelation explicitly.

Now we have to ask: Why can we not accept that which Christ Himself said as the primary meaning of the Old Testament text? He said: “*You search the Scriptures* (that is the Old Testament) *...and these are they which testify of Me*” (John 5:39).

Why is it impossible for the translators to see Christ as the primary content of the Old Testament?

The question can be asked of the Bible translators: Is it really that impossible and academically unacceptable to follow Christ in His exegesis of the Old Testament?

Another question is: Who determines the ‘obvious meaning’ of a text in the Old Testament? Do people who do not see Christ there, determine this?

The fact that the Old Testament testified of Christ also means that we have to be careful in distinguishing between an ‘obvious (or primary) meaning’ and a ‘deeper meaning’ of Old Testament passages. This distinction can easily lead to a reading of Christ only in the ‘deeper meaning’ and not in the ‘obvious meaning’. This would contradict John 5:39 where Christ Himself said that the Old Testament testified without reservation about Him.

Over against some verses which could possibly indicate such a distinction, several hundred verses in the New Testament indicate that the Old Testament testified directly to Christ. Also, in the New Testament occur only a few verses quoted from the Old Testament in an allegorical, symbolical and metaphorical way. (In the Bible Society document it was mentioned that for example Hosea 11:1 was quoted allegorically in Matthew 2:15).

If an ‘obvious (or primary) meaning’ can be distinguished from a ‘deeper meaning’ in Old Testament passages, acknowledge that both meanings testify to Christ.

To therefore divide the Old Testament revelation into two levels, namely one level where Christ could not be identified and another level where He could be identified, is unscriptural and out of order. Thus, this distinction should rather not be made.

The result of such a distinction is evident. Christ is deprived of His place of honour in the Old Testament and lower case is employed. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is also divested of His honour – and the word *Gees* (Spirit) is written in lower case in Genesis 1:2, in the first edition of the booklet: *Proefvertaling: Afrikaanse Bybelvertalingsprojek*, [Trial translation: Afrikaans Bible Translation Project] which was published in 2008. (Genesis 1:2 reads there as follows: *En die gees van God was aan die sweef oor die water*. [And the spirit of God was moving across the water]).

Where Christ and the Holy Spirit are not acknowledged in Scripture, God the Father is not the One remaining, as He can only be known through the work (and acknowledgement) of the Holy Spirit. The reality is that another god is promoted, other than the God functioning in the Old Testament.

The Bible itself says that it is possible to proclaim a Jesus other than the true and real Jesus (2 Cor 11:4). Therefore: if Christ is being reasoned and translated out of the Old Testament (in whatever argument) then we are dealing with another christ and not the true Christ.

Why is Christ relegated to the background, in for example Isaiah 53, by using lower case? He is after all a Divine Person. Isaiah 53 refers solely to Him, and if it referred to anyone else, nobody could be saved.

The truth is uncompromising in that the Old Testament, as does the New Testament, positively proclaims the only true Christ (Messiah) throughout. Look at this:

333 references to the Messiah occur in the Old Testament (see: WH Griffith Thomas: *How we got our Bible*, page 17). My comment: The number of 333 probably refers only to the number of references to Christ that occur in the Messianic prophecies. To this may be added the times that Christ is depicted as the Angel, that are not included in the number of 333 yet. In total, in the Old Testament Christ is depicted about 60 times as *Angel*, *Angel of the LORD*, *Angel of God*, *Angel of His face*, and *Angel of the covenant*.

Phrases like: *The LORD spoke...*, *God said...*, *God commanded...*, and *the word of the LORD came to me...* occur more than 3,000 times in both Testaments (*How we got our Bible*, page 54). Most of these occur in the Old Testament. All of these phrases always mean that Christ had spoken,

because always the Father has spoken only through His Son and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Every word in the Old Testament, in the original was thus inspired (compare Mat 5:18).

Thus, Christ was concerned with the Old Testament in various ways. He is the Messenger (or Giver) and the Message thereof.

The Old Testament witnesses in various ways about Him. Also, in the Old Testament types of Christ occur (like Adam, Rom 5:14) and shadows of Him (Col 2:16-17; Heb 10:1). Christ Himself acknowledged that prefigurations occurred in the Old Testament (Jonah 1:17; Mat 12:39-40). However, we have to take care that overemphasis of prefigurations does not supplant Christ in the Old Testament.

The New Testament declares that the whole of the Old Testament testifies of Christ (John 5:39) and that the Old Testament also contains the Gospel (Heb 4:2, 6). All the prophets had this message in common (Acts 10:43). The people in Old Testament times also had to believe this in order to be saved. Therefore the New Testament does not teach that the Old Testament had a “self-evident” meaning without the presence of Christ.

It is clear that the point of departure the writers of the above document wish to convey, is totally unacceptable. The ‘obvious meaning’ also is just that which the Holy Spirit revealed – and unmistakably: that which He revealed about Christ.

If the Bible had been a compilation of human stories, the argument of the above writers might have held water. However, to downgrade the Scriptures to a document where Christ is not revealed from start to finish, is sin. The truth is that the Holy Spirit inspired the whole of the Bible (2 Pet 1:20, 21).

Christ is not only acknowledged in the Old Testament as a result of a dogmatic sense. It is precisely the ‘obvious meaning’ to acknowledge Him throughout the Old Testament in the Messianic prophecies and in His various appearances in the form of visions. Nobody is allowed to remove Him from His place of honour.

People in Old Testament times had to acknowledge and honour Him as Messiah from their knowledge of the Old Testament. Only those who acknowledged Him as such and believed in Him were saved. There is no other way in which they could be saved (John 14:6).

6. Is the source text of the Old Testament silent about Christ?

Allegation: In a translation with upper case the source text is not translated faithfully, and the primary meaning is ‘affected’ and ‘weakened’.

Reply:

The contrary is the truth, namely: By using lower case and thus translating Christ out of the Old Testament, the meaning of the source text is affected and weakened. (The Hebrew text has a different script and does not employ upper or lower case. Therefore the context must reveal who is intended in every case.)

The source text (the Hebrew text) is the Old Testament revelation which God presented. For that reason it is vitally important. Thus it should be handled and applied according to criteria which would do justice to it.

But what is the criterion of our Bible translators? They mainly regard the Scriptures as the product of folk-tales compiled from legends, myths, fables and heroic tales. According to the presuppositions of many Bible translators the Old Testament does not deal with the revelation from God in the first place, but with human stories. Thus according to them the Scriptures emanated merely from man, and: the (primitive) people who handed down those stories knew nothing about Christ and the Holy Spirit, therefore the Old Testament could not relate about Them. (Compare the document: *A problem with Bible translations*, which can be found on the website www.2016vertaling.co.za.)

These presuppositions declare the real motive of the Bible translators. They want to use the source text to produce a translation where Christ and the Holy Spirit are not on centre stage.

The content of the Bible simply does not deal with the original languages themselves, but with the message contained therein. Translation should reveal the correct message. If the translators do this, the original languages will not be violated, but would rather come into their own. The Scriptures were given not for the sake of the languages, but for the sake of the message.

What are the Scriptures in fact? Both the Old and New Testaments are revelations of God directly given through the Holy Spirit. (Read for example: Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 32:15, 16; 34:1, 2, 27, 28; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.) In some of these verses mention is made of God writing the law with His *finger*. This indicates the action of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

But what else does the Bible Society document say? It declares: And the translators and the Bible Society do emphatically not want to deviate from that (namely that it should be a faithful rendering of the source text).

Do they reckon they are faithful to the source text when using lower case? We have to regard this as misleading. Do they not violate the words 'source text'?

One can but wonder why so much emphasis is placed on the source text when that is seen as merely human stories where Christ and the Holy Spirit are not clearly discovered.

7. May the Holy Spirit be devalued?

Allegation: An honest translator may be convinced that the Holy Spirit guided the writers of the New Testament in their understanding of the Old Testament, but will not 'write it into' the translated text of the Old or New Testaments, unless it is clearly stated in the source text.

Reply:

Two comments can be made about this statement:

At first: This quotation (translated) was taken from the last paragraph of the document of the Bible Society. This is the sole reference to the Holy Spirit in the whole document. According to the compiler(s) of the document, the guidance of the Holy Spirit is therefore not the real premise which should guide the translation. (In the first edition of this document of 2009, the above paragraph appeared as a foot-note only, and the Holy Spirit was thus mentioned only once in that document. This paragraph was shifted by them to become the last paragraph in the 2011 edition of the Bible Society's document.)

Secondly: It is evident that the Holy Spirit is regarded negatively in the above document. That which is really expressed there is that a translator does not have to heed the guidance of the Holy Spirit in his interpretation of the Scriptures. Actually, in this case the Holy Spirit does not matter. This we also know from the document's defence of the use of lower case.

What then is the proper sense of Bible translation? It occupies itself with exactly that which the Holy Spirit revealed. Therefore the translators have to show the Holy Spirit revelation throughout a Bible translation. The Holy Spirit used the source texts (the Hebrew and the Greek texts) precisely to present the revelation very clearly. The Holy Spirit opened the Scriptures to the writers of the Bible for them to understand what God had to say.

The writers of the Bible Society document have a point of view which is out of order, precisely because the Holy Spirit is not acknowledged for His leading and guidance in understanding of the Scriptures. To purposefully not relay the Holy Spirit revelation consistently (and thus also not writing the Names of Christ in upper case) is a symptom of disobedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Only the Holy Spirit can indicate to us the true meaning of the Old Testament passages. He is the *Spirit of Christ*, Who was in the prophets and therefore in all the writers of the Bible (1 Pet 1:11). This content the Holy Spirit already revealed to the readers of the Old Testament – and those who believed were saved.

Further light on this is obtained from 2 Peter 1:20, 21. We are taught: *no prophecy of Scripture can be expounded by means of own interpretation*. In other words: To read the Scriptures without the clear knowledge that the Holy Spirit guides in the understanding thereof, is out of order. The reason for this is that the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of the Bible, thus they spoke *from* God (2 Pet 1:21 – according to the original text). Indeed, the Holy Spirit also led the Old Testament believers to understand the Old Testament correctly (Neh 9:20; Is 63:11).

1 Corinthians 12:3 tells us that nobody can truly and honestly say Jesus is Lord, except by the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This teaches us that nobody can understand the 'obvious' and the so-called 'deeper' meaning of the Bible without the leading of the Holy Spirit. In other words: If the Holy Spirit guides a reader of the Bible, he will be able to see Christ in the Scriptures. Then it is clear to him that Christ is both the 'obvious' and the 'deeper' meaning, and in fact the Message of the Scriptures – wherever he might read in the Bible.

Another question is this: How did the inspiration of the Scriptures occur? The "organic inspiration theory" seems to be the most acceptable. This means the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible, taking the skills of the authors into account. Each one retained his own style of writing, for example Paul wrote long sentences (compare the 1953 translation).

8. Is dogmatic sense to be avoided?

Allegation: When translating the Bible, dogmatic sense must be avoided.
And: The text is more important than the dogmatic sense thereof.

Reply:

'Dogmatic sense' means to ask about the teaching and the message to be found in a passage. This teaching and message are of crucial importance. To clearly state the teaching and message given by God Himself in a passage, is an obligation. It is no option.

We are privileged to have the New Testament, where God Himself declares the content of the Old Testament. It is exactly the same meaning the Old Testament has always had. The text of the Old Testament was given for the purpose of presenting this teaching and message to all readers (at the time of the Old and New Testaments).

To purposefully withhold this teaching and message from the Bible readers means that the Bible translators allow the Bible to say something different from what is intended, and in this way the message of Scripture is distorted and obscured. The use of lower case obviously wants to convey the wrong message.

By not conveying the true (dogmatic) message of the Old Testament, which is dealing with the place of honour of Christ, a translation is forced to say something different from the real message which should be apparent.

If the Bible is translated in such a way that the message, or dogma, is not present, proclamation of the message of the Scriptures from such a translation may not be preached in churches, as there will not be a message from Scripture in such a translation.

One example may be helpful: When Jesus died on the cross, He experienced the worst possible conditions. In the midst of His physical suffering, His Father left Him and brought His wrath over our sins to bear on Jesus. The fact that His Father left Him means that He was cut off from the mercy of His Father, and Jesus was therefore exposed to the full impact of hell. We conclude that the devil with all his millions of (fallen) angels and all his powers were directed at Jesus (John 12:31; Col 2:14, 15). And Jesus was victorious! The fact is: no ordinary man could have been victorious under those conditions.

To translate Isaiah 53 as if Jesus, as God and Lord, was not the only One to die for our sins (and in that way ignore the doctrine of Scripture) is to mislead the reader of the Bible.

9. What are the correct presuppositions?

Allegation: Every translator has to be aware of the dangers involved in own presuppositions and dogmatic convictions. Dogmatic convictions of the translator could very easily have the text say something different to that which is written in the source text.

Reply:

Every Bible translator has some presuppositions when doing the work of translation. These presuppositions can be either the wrong ideas of people, or those which are according to the revelation of God in His Word.

First possibility: The wrong presuppositions of Bible translators can be for example:

- ◆ that Christ and the Holy Spirit did not really have an input in the giving and exegesis of the Scriptures,
- ◆ that the Scriptures are mainly the product of human stories which developed into folk-tales and traditions and penned at a later stage, and
- ◆ that Christ is not the primary content and message of the Old Testament.

Many theological faculties and Bible Knowledge departments in South Africa taught students during the past decades among others that the Bible is to a large extent the product of folk-tales, and thus legends, fables, myths and heroic stories. The truth is that many of the lecturers who taught and are still teaching students these things, are now the Bible translators.

The use of lower case as is happening in the Afrikaans theology, is unscientific, as it does not take faith as point of departure, but unbelief.

Note: A number of presuppositions, or arguments, many Bible translators apply are discussed in the book: *Do we want an Old Testament without Christ?* (Read chapter 7). It can be found on the website www.2016vertaling.co.za .

Second possibility: The Bible translators (and Bible readers!) can rejoice in the correct presuppositions, namely that God Himself in all His omnipotence, supreme wisdom and truth provided people with His Scripture revelation. Both the primary and deeper content thereof is that God reveals Himself therein, through His Angel/Messenger/Prophet/Spokesman/Word.

People who choose to follow God's exegesis of His own Word, have the right presuppositions. This correct choice of following God's exegesis of His own Word, is imperative, an obligation. A translator will not err by following the New Testament exegesis of the Old Testament. This presupposition is not old-fashioned or inferior. It is God explaining (exegeting) His own Word. The Word is always true and fresh. It is also powerful in defeating heresy.

Fact is, the readers at the time of the Old Testament had to properly see and believe the Messianic content. By virtue of this correct and sincere faith in the Messiah (Anointed/Christ) they were saved. They had to believe He is the eternal God, Lord, Son (of God), King, Priest, Prophet and Messiah. These are the Names the present Bible translators want to translate out! (Consider what happened in the 1983 translation!)

By honouring Christ in a Bible translation, the Old Testament context is not relegated to the background, but it comes into prominence.

This is evident from the following:

- ◆ The daily lives of people in Old Testament times concerned the function of Christ in the Old Testament entirely. Everything was created by Him (John 1:3) and He was the One Who sustained it ever since (Heb 1:3). The mountains, sea and stars, the reality which encompassed the lives of the Old Testament people (even as these do us now) were there because of Christ's continuous activity. How can we then deny Him His place of honour in the Old Testament?
- ◆ Christ Himself said: "*You search the Scriptures (that is the Old Testament) ...and these are they which testify of Me*" (John 5:39).
- ◆ The Gospel was proclaimed to the people of the Old Testament the same as to us today (Heb 4:2, 6).
- ◆ The same Gospel is found in the Old and New Testaments, as both had the same Giver, namely Jesus Christ (the Angel/Messenger and Word). The very first verse of the Gospel of John clearly says that Jesus had always been the Word. (See how heavily this truth impressed itself on the heart of the apostle John!) The fact that both Testaments had the same Giver, means they have the same authority and message.
- ◆ Christ knows absolutely what He Himself proclaimed in the Old Testament. That He correctly declared in the New Testament.
- ◆ **All** the Old Testament Bible books relate about Jesus (compare Luke 24:25, 27, 44) and **all** the Old Testament prophets wrote about Jesus (compare Acts 3:18; 10:43).
- ◆ The Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament deal about Christ (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46; John 19:28, 36, 37 and Acts 13:27, 29, 32; 18:28; 26:22, 23). The words, "*It is finished!*" (fulfilled and completed, John 19:30) also point to this.

- ◆ The Old Testament teaches already that one of the Persons in the Deity (namely the Messiah) would die for our sins. This becomes evident from His characteristics, namely: He had *no sin* (Isaiah 53:9), He was *fully righteous* (Isaiah 53:11) and He was able to *make others righteous*, thus to save them from hell and give heaven to them (Isaiah 53:11). Only God could do that.
- ◆ It is clear that Christ would also die for the sins of the people of the Old Testament, because the word *our* is repeated several times in Isaiah 53:4-6, for example: *He was crushed for our iniquities* (verse 5).
- ◆ God is not subject to time or limited by time, as time is part of creation. God is exalted above creation. Therefore the meaning of Christ's crucifixion also applied to the Old Testament believers.
- ◆ The relationship between the Old and New Testaments can at best be described as promise-fulfilment. It is important for the promise and the fulfilment to agree entirely.

Many passages in the Old Testament were directly fulfilled in the New Testament. (For some examples compare Psalm 2:2 with Acts 4:25, 26; and Psalm 45:6, 7 with Hebrews 1:8, 9; and Psalm 110:1 with Luke 20:42.) Moreover: Christ already had the offices and the Names indicated in these verses (namely *Anointed/Messiah/Christ, God and Lord*) in the Old Testament and had already acted actively as such.

Allegory is out of the question here and also in the vast majority of verses indicating the promise-fulfilment.

Though, there occurs a number of indirect Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament (compare for example Luke 23:46 with Ps 31:5; and John 19:33, 36 with Ex 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20; 1 Cor 5:7). But still: the Messianic content is evident in each case. It always has a reference to Christ.

One should always keep this in mind: According to the New Testament, the Old Testament is *directly-Messianic!* Always think about what Jesus Himself (and also all the writers of Bible books) had said.

Revelation in the Old Testament deals with Christ (and God the Father and the Holy Spirit). This revelation about Christ should be regarded as the primary meaning of the Old Testament and this should be conveyed to Bible readers.

Summary: The Bible translators who translate Christ out of the Bible, must consider the words of Christ Himself: *"If anyone loves Me he will keep My word... Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words..."* (John 14:23, 24).

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 Precisely because so many Bible translations contain wrong tendencies, it is significant to now use the correct points of departure (presuppositions). If the Bible translators do not employ the correct Biblical points of departure, the readers of the Bible might get the impression that the Bible emanated from man and was not given from Above. An added impression could be that the Bible does not deal with what God said, but with man's concept thereof.
- 10.2 The Triune God revealed Himself in the Old Testament as well. It must be clear to the readers of the Bible how each of the Persons is revealed in the Old Testament.

- 10.3 It is logical that for example the Pentecostal churches would not accept (and use) a Bible which disregards the Holy Spirit. Moreover, it should be the point of view of every denomination not to accept a Bible translation where Christ and the Holy Spirit are translated out.
- 10.4 The use of lower case can cause much damage and even schisms in churches and between believers, but the use of upper case will cause no damage or schisms. Is it not the duty of the Bible Society and the Bible translators to ensure they are not guilty of such schisms? How on earth can they translate Christ and the Holy Spirit out of the Old Testament by using lower case?
- 10.5. It is for the supreme sake of the Kingdom to be frankly honest. For that reason I would like to tell the Bible Society and the Bible translators: By using lower case, you are translating the Lord Jesus out of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Throughout the names of people and even animals are written in upper case. How much more is Christ being humiliated by writing His Names in His own Word in lower case! In this practice the Bible translators and the Bible Society indeed make themselves guilty of heresy. Please give up on that.

Furthermore they must be aware that the use of lower case is a symptom of among others the following:

- the Divinity of Christ is essentially denied,
- the relevant Bible translators lack the holy reverence and fear for God, and
- the Divine authority of the prophecies is disregarded.

Now we can ask the translators: Do you really want to persist in this?

The Bible translators can safely spare Bible readers much confusion and misunderstanding by clearly conveying the message of the Scriptures in the new Bible translation by using upper case letters.

- 10.6 Should only the Messianic passages quoted in the New Testament be written in upper case in the Old Testament? What about the other passages in the Old Testament which clearly contain prophecies about Christ?
- The answer is: The Gospel is found in the Old Testament, even as in the New Testament (John 5:39; Acts 10:43; Heb 4:2, 6). The whole of the Old Testament is thus Gospel. Therefore many more words and passages of Scripture, than those quoted in the New Testament, can be in upper case in the Old Testament.
- 10.7 This request is urgent: There should be only one edition of this new Bible, and that should be an upper case edition. This translation must contain more upper case than even the 1953 translation.

The translators of the new Afrikaans Bible translation have the opportunity to present to Afrikaans-speaking generations to come, a Bible where the revelation of God is proclaimed clearly and correctly. They should please, please not conceal the value of salvation contained therein with for example the use of lower case!

This is not written as ill-disposed. It is written as an honest and essential testimony.

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- ✘ **This document titled: *Point of view of the Bible Society and Bible translators*, is one of the documents available in Afrikaans and English on the website www.2016vertaling.co.za .**

- ✘ **My books can be found on the website www.thetruerevelation.co.za (don't Google).**

All the documents on this website had been submitted in advance to the Bible Society, the leaders of the new Afrikaans Bible Translation Project and the editorial staff of *Kerkbode*.