

# The “Conservative Bible Project”: The Interplay of Ideology and Translation

AMATEUR EXEGETE  
amateurexegete@gmail.com

Those of a more socially, politically, and theologically conservative persuasion have long lamented what they have perceived as “liberal” ideology influencing the translation of biblical texts. The “Conservative Bible Project” represents some of those so persuaded and their work seeks to promote conservative ideals in the context of translation work. However, the CBP is problematic in numerous ways, both in its so-called “guidelines” as well as in particular passages. In this paper, I will briefly lay out the difficulties of doing translation work, the ways in which ideology can affect translation of biblical texts, the fundamental problem with two of the CBP’s guidelines, and particular translation errors and issues in the CBP’s rendering of Mark 1.

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## Abbreviations

BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.	KTU	Dietrich, Manfred, Loretz Oswald, and Sanmartín, Joaquín, eds. <i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> enlarged ed. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1997.
CBP	Conservative Bible Project	LB	Living Bible
ESV	English Standard Version	LXX	Septuagint
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible	MT	Masoretic Text (Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia)
KJV	King James Version	NASB	New American Standard Bible
		NET	New English Translation.
		NIV	New International Version
		NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
		UBS	United Bible Society Greek New Testament, 5 <sup>th</sup> edition

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# I. The Difficulty of Translation

Translation is undoubtedly a difficult task. Languages do not exist in a vacuum but both influence and are influenced by the culture into which they are embedded. For example, the Spanish idiom *estar como una cabra* literally means “to be like a goat.”<sup>1</sup> But what is such an idiom intended to communicate? Is it that one is ornery? That one is indiscriminate in food choice? Unless one is a part of the culture in which the idiom arose, its meaning can be difficult to ascertain. In this instance, the idiom means “to act crazy.” But suppose a translator is working with a Spanish language text and comes across the words, *¡Estás como una cabra!* Should she render it literally? Or should she attempt to convey what the English equivalent of the idiom would be?

Idioms are not the only difficulty a translator can face. In English syntax, clauses are created in a formulaic way: subject + verb. If that verb is transitive then it is followed by a direct object, making the formula, subject + verb + direct object. But this formula is not always required in other languages and in both Hebrew and Greek these formulas are routinely cast aside. Consider the clause that begins John 3:16: Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον. Most English translations will render this clause, “For God so loved the world” (i.e. ESV, KJV, NASB, NRSV). However, the nominative subject ὁ θεὸς doesn’t appear until *after* the aorist verb ἠγάπησεν. Moreover, the first word in the clause is the adverb οὕτως and its placement in the sentence is intended to emphasize the manner in which God loved the world: “that he gave his one and only Son.” But how should a translator render this clause? Should she place the emphasis where the Johannine author has placed it? Or should she stick to English conventions?

Style is also a factor in translation. In Hebrew, independent clauses often begin with the conjunction וְ in a phenomenon known as parataxis.<sup>2</sup> The Priestly author of Genesis 1 employed parataxis effectively in the numerous clauses that comprise his account.<sup>3</sup> For example, consider the activity described on the first day of creation (Genesis 1:3-5).

MT                   :וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי אוֹר: <sup>3</sup>  
                          :וַיִּרְא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאוֹר כִּי-טוֹב וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאוֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ: <sup>4</sup>  
                          :וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לְאוֹר יוֹם וְלַחֹשֶׁךְ קָרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד: <sup>5</sup>

Each verse begins with וְ + a verb and within each verse וְ is connected to either verbs or substantives. The translators of the KJV sought to preserve Hebrew style by rendering each instance of וְ with the conjunction “and.”

<sup>1</sup> Peter Weibel, *The Big Red Book of Spanish Idioms* (McGraw-Hill, 2004), 26.

<sup>2</sup> See Robert Alter, *The Art of Bible Translation* (Princeton University Press, 2019), 28-31. Parataxis is also visible in Christian narratives. For example, in the Gospel of Mark the Greek conjunction καί begins over sixty percent of all sentences.

<sup>3</sup> Alter writes, “In the Creation story, [parataxis] conveys a harmonious choreographed series of cosmogonic speech-acts.” Alter, 29.

KJV <sup>3</sup> And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.  
<sup>4</sup> And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.  
<sup>5</sup> And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

For some readers, the persistent use of “and” seems almost unnecessary. This is reflected in how other English translations like the NIV render the Hebrew of Genesis 1:3-5.

NIV <sup>3</sup> And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.  
<sup>5</sup> God called the light “day,” and the darkness he called “night.” And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day.

Vss. 4 and 5 begin, not with “And God” but with simply “God,” thereby obscuring parataxis in the Hebrew text. Other translations like the NRSV and the ESV do a better job of appreciating Hebrew style in this regard. But should a translator preserve the parataxis out of regard for the original? Or should she ignore it and attempt to create a seemingly smoother translation for potential readers?

At heart, then, is motive. For what purpose is a translator producing their translation? Is it to communicate faithfully the *wording* of the original? Is it to convey the *message* of the original? Is it to create something deemed more *readable*? Is it to produce a document for *religious* use? Is it to offer non-specialists something as close to a *literal* translation as possible? Motivation most certainly affects the way in which a translator works but surely not all motivations or methods are equal. For example, Genesis 1:3 (LXX) reads, καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. Though the English word “photon” is derived from the Greek word φῶς, it would be improper to translate Genesis 1:3 as, “And God said, ‘Let there be photons.’ And there were photons.” Why? Because the original author of Genesis did not know what a photon was. Such a translation would be motivated by scientific concerns and such concerns are out of line with the prerogatives of the author of Genesis 1.

## II. Ideology and Translation

Though the aforementioned rendering of φῶς as “photon” should not be considered a real-world instance of a translator running amuck, there are surely instances where ideology has resulted in translation that is incongruent with the meaning of the original text. For example, compare Job 1:6 in the MT and LXX.

MT :וַיְהִי הַיּוֹם וַיִּבְאוּ בְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים לְהִתְיַצֵּב עַל־יְהוָה וַיִּבֹּא גַם־הַשָּׁטָן בְּתוֹכָם.  
LXX Καὶ ὡς ἐγένετο ἡ ἡμέρα αὕτη, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἦλθον οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ παραστῆναι ἐνώπιον τοῦ κυρίου, καὶ ὁ διάβολος ἦλθεν μετ’ αὐτῶν.

The scene in the MT recalls scenes common to ANE literature wherein the pantheon of deities appear in an assembly.<sup>4</sup> In the tablets found at Ugarit, the assembly is at times referred to as *phr bn 'ilm*,<sup>5</sup> i.e., “the assembly of the gods”<sup>6</sup> or “the assembly of the divine sons.”<sup>7</sup> The deities themselves are at times referred to *bn 'il*, i.e. “sons of El” or “children of El.”<sup>8</sup> Here too in Job 1:6 is found בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים, “sons of God.” The implication is that these are divine beings who have gathered before 'ēlōhîm, the high god, to offer a report.<sup>9</sup> The translation offered by the LXX obscures this relic of Israel’s henotheism by changing בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים to οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ, the consequence of a more rigid monotheism that had already been developed in Israelite history by the time of the LXX’s origin.<sup>10</sup>

This issue is certainly not reserved only for ancient translations. The proliferation of English translations of biblical texts has resulted in problematic renderings. A frequent offender is the NIV, a popular translation that at times seems motivated more by theological concerns than by faithful translation of the original texts. For example, Genesis 21:8-21 tells the story of the expulsion of Hagar and her son Ishmael. Vs. 14 reports that Abraham got up early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar for their journey. The skin of water, the text tells us, עַל-שִׁכְמָהּ הִנִּיחָהּ הַיֶּלֶד, the implication being that Hagar was carrying upon her shoulders both the skin of water and her son Ishmael. The difficulty here, of course, is that in Genesis 17:25 the text presents Ishmael as a young teenager. Yet not only does Hagar carry Ishmael on her shoulder as she departs Abraham and Sarah, in Genesis 21:15, when she exhausts her supply of water, she “cast” (פָּלְטָה) Ishmael under a bush. The verb פָּלְטָה is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible when speaking of throwing or flinging an object<sup>11</sup> and in Exodus 1:22 is used with reference to Pharaoh’s command to Israelite midwives that male Hebrew infants were to be thrown into the Nile. The implication in Genesis 21:8-21, then, is that Ishmael is a young child, young enough to be carried upon Hagar’s shoulder with ease and to be flung under a bush.

The text of Genesis 21:14 in the NIV says that Abraham took food and a skin of water and “set them on [Hagar’s] shoulders and then sent her off with the boy.” This translation is clearly an attempt to reconcile the potential problem created by the Hebrew text. This is seen also in how it renders פָּלְטָה in vs. 15. Rather than having Hagar fling the child, the NIV reports that she “put the boy under one of the bushes.” Such a translation softens the verb in keeping with the child’s assumed age from Genesis 17:25 but it is

<sup>4</sup> Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 41.

<sup>5</sup> KTU, 1.4 III 14; Cf. Psalm 29:1, 89:7 (MT).

<sup>6</sup> Michael D. Coogan and Mark S. Smith, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, second edition (Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 128.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 41.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 42. Cf. Aicha Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts*, J.N. Ford (translator) (Brill, 2007), 88-89; Gregorio del Olmo Lete and Joaquín Sanmartín, *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language in the Alphabetic Tradition*, Wilfred G.E. Watson (translator) (Brill, 2015), 224.

<sup>9</sup> David J.A. Clines, *Job 1-20*, WBC vol. 17 (Nelson Reference and Electronic, 1989), 19.

<sup>10</sup> See John Gray, *The Book of Job* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010), 126.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Genesis 37:20, Exodus 4:3, etc.

motivated by a theological concern, namely one related to beliefs about the Bible's infallibility.<sup>12</sup>

In the New Testament similar issues abound. For example, in Romans 7:18 the NIV reads, "For I know the good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (cf. vs. 25). The phrase "sinful nature" translates σαρκί, a word that simply means "flesh." The idea of a "sinful nature" assumes that the Augustinian concept of original sin is valid, an idea about which not all Christians agree. Consequently, such a rendering forces Paul into a theological camp in which he may or may not have belonged. Did he mean "sinful nature" when he wrote σαρκί? Perhaps. But it isn't necessarily clear that he did.<sup>13</sup>

At issue here is not merely the interpretive work that the NIV does in its translation. All translation is at some level interpretation. Rather, the issue is that the NIV reads back into the text ideological and theological views that aren't necessarily derived from it. These assumptions drive theological points, but a good translation tries to render a source text with the fewest assumptions possible. There should be neither a liberal nor conservative take on the text itself.

### III. The "Conservative Bible Project"

This, of course, does not prevent anyone from creating a translation that follows from liberal or conservative assumptions. One such translation is the "Conservative Bible Project," a translation of the Bible built upon the KJV that seeks to correct what is seen as "liberal bias" in many modern translations.<sup>14</sup> The translation process was guided by ten "guidelines."

1. To provide "a strong framework that enables a thought-for-thought translation without corruption by liberal bias."
2. To avoid emasculating terms.
3. To not participate in the "dumbing down" seen in translations like the NIV.
4. To "capture original intent" through the use of "conservative terms."<sup>15</sup>
5. To "combat harmful addiction."
6. To "accept the logic of Hell."
7. To "express free market parables."

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<sup>12</sup> The preface to the 1984 edition of the NIV says that "the translators were united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God's Word in written form." See "Preface," <http://www.bible-researcher.com/niv-preface.html>.

<sup>13</sup> For an introduction to the issue, see Douglas J. Moo, "Flesh' in Romans: A Challenge for the Translator," in Glen G. Scourgie, et.al. (general editors), *The Challenge of Bible Translation: Communicating God's Word to the World* (Zondervan, 2003), 365-379; cf. James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC vol. 38a (Thomas Nelson, 1988), 390-391.

<sup>14</sup> "Conservative Bible Project," [https://www.conservapedia.com/Conservative\\_Bible\\_Project](https://www.conservapedia.com/Conservative_Bible_Project).

<sup>15</sup> A list of so called "conservative terms" can be found here: "Essay: Best New Conservative Words," [https://www.conservapedia.com/Essay:Best\\_New\\_Conservative\\_Words](https://www.conservapedia.com/Essay:Best_New_Conservative_Words).

8. To remove interpolated passages “that liberals commonly put their own spin on.”
9. To “credit open-mindedness of the disciples.”
10. To “prefer conciseness over liberal wordiness.”

Space does not permit a full evaluation of these “guidelines” but two warrant further consideration.

### *“Liberal bias”*

Guideline one asserts that newer translations are built upon a framework of “liberal bias.” As an example of that bias, the page claims that the Living Bible has a “liberal evolutionary bias.” Setting aside the idea that evolutionary theory is a “liberal” concept, a citation on the page links to a piece by Christian Assemblies International entitled “Evolution’s Influence on Modern Bible Translations.”<sup>16</sup> As an example of the influence evolutionary theory has had on Bible translation, the author of that article quotes Genesis 1:1 from the LB which reads, “When God began creating the heavens and the earth.” This translation, the author laments, “loses the majesty of the simple Hebrew.”

Here the phrase ‘began creating’ gives the impression of slow development rather than creative fiat. There is no warrant for this translation, even in paraphrase. The Hebrew verb is a simple, unadorned ‘BARA’ = He created, one act in the past, with no continuous action implied.

While it is true that בָּרָא is a “simple” verb, it is not a verb used in total isolation. The verse opens with בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים, and it is the word אֱלֹהִים that complicates the matter. Long before the discovery of either biological or cosmological evolution, medieval scholars observed that whenever אֱלֹהִים appears in the Hebrew Bible it does so in the construct state. Therefore, Genesis 1:1 could be translated, “In the beginning of God’s creating the heaven and the earth,” or, as in the NRSV, “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.”<sup>17</sup> Far from being an example of “liberal” bias built upon evolutionary science, the translation of Genesis 1:1 in the LB is grammatically sound.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “Evolution’s Influence on Modern Bible Translations,” <http://www.cai.org/bible-studies/evolutions-influence-modern-bible-translations>.

<sup>17</sup> See Steven DiMattei, *Genesis 1 and the Creationism Debate: Being Honest to the Text, Its Author, and His Beliefs* (Wipf & Stock, 2016), 11-12; Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Fortress Press, 2010), electronic edition, ch. 2.1.

<sup>18</sup> This, of course, does not mean that it is sound throughout Genesis 1 or even the rest of the Bible. The author of the Living Bible used poetic license in his work such that the Living Bible should not be depended upon for an accurate rendering of the underlying Hebrew text.

## *“Dumbing down”*

The CBP translators also sought to combat the “dumbing down” of Bible translations and assert that “the NIV is written at only the 7<sup>th</sup> grade level.” No supporting documentation is provided for such a claim and calculating such a thing is difficult and controversial. The assumption on the part of the CBP translators is that a *lower* grade level is essentially a bad thing and that the NIV, ranking at a middle-school level, represents a “dumbed down” version of the Bible.

Using an online tool which allows for the testing of text as it relates to readability offers some insight into the issue.<sup>19</sup> The text of Genesis 1 in the KJV registers at a 7.8 on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Readability scale. The number 7.8 indicates that it should be readable by someone in the seventh grade. By comparison, the NIV registers at a 5.5 and should therefore be understandable by someone in the fifth grade. The CBP’s translation of Genesis 1 sits at 4.8 on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Readability scale, far easier to read and comprehend than either the KJV or the NIV. If the NIV represents a translation that dumbs down Christianity because it is written at a fifth-grade level, then what can be said of the CBP since it sits at a fourth-grade level?

## IV. Discussion of Select Passages

Given the perils and pitfalls of creating a translation, it should come as no surprise that the translators of the CBP make many mistakes in their work. Some of these are no doubt due to a lack of familiarity with the original languages while others are due to particular assumptions about the meaning of biblical texts. This can be readily seen in their translation of the first chapter of Mark.<sup>20</sup> Here I will consider a few texts.

### *“Preaching baptism” or “preaching repentance” (Mark 1:4)?*

**Greek:** ἐγένετο Ἰωάννης [ὁ] βαπτίζων ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ καὶ κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

**My translation:** “John appeared, the one who was baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”

**CBP:** “As it happened, John was baptizing in the desert, preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins.”

Mark 1:4 opens a pericope concerning the ministry of John the Baptist, an apocalyptic prophet who, like Jesus, meets an untimely end at the hands of powerful

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<sup>19</sup> “Readability Formulas,” <http://www.readabilityformulas.com>. By entering text into the “Automatic Readability Checker,” the website is able to assess the readability of a text across a variety of formulaic platforms. This, of course, is not a scientific analysis of readability and conclusions should be drawn cautiously.

<sup>20</sup> “Mark 1-8 (Translated),” [https://www.conservapedia.com/Mark\\_1-8\\_\(Translated\)](https://www.conservapedia.com/Mark_1-8_(Translated)).

potentates (cf. Mark 6:14-29). Here John’s activity is described using two participles: βαπτίζων and κηρύσσων. βαπτίζων is followed by the locative ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, designating the geographic setting of John’s work. κηρύσσων, on the other hand, is followed by the accusative βάπτισμα. That is, the subject or content of John’s preaching was baptism.<sup>21</sup> The Markan author further modifies βάπτισμα with the genitive μετανοίας which itself is modified with the prepositional phrase εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν.

The translation proffered by the CBP represents a radical reworking of the Greek text in two ways. First, it has abandoned what in the Greek text is the clear object of the participle κηρύσσων: βάπτισμα. Instead, the CBP has opted to consider μετανοίας, the noun which describes βάπτισμα,<sup>22</sup> as the participle’s object. There is no linguistic justification for such a translation. Second, the CBP has altered μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν into what has effectively become μετανοίας καὶ ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν. This too lacks any warrant.

The conclusion that must be invariably drawn from the analysis above is that the words “preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins” in the CBP is, in fact, a mistranslation. But it is not only a mistranslation; it is a mishandling of the underlying Greek text. And unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident for, as I will show, the issues present here are found again and again in just the first half of the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark alone.

### *“Baptized, confessing their sins” or “Confessing their sins and receiving baptism” (Mark 1:5)?*

**Greek:** καὶ ἐξεπορεύετο πρὸς αὐτὸν πᾶσα ἡ Ἰουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ Ἱεροσολυμίται πάντες, καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν.

**My translation:** “And going out to him was the entire region of Judea and all of Jerusalem, and they were being baptized in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.”

**CBP:** “Everyone from the country of Judea and Jerusalem went to him, confessing their sins and receiving baptism in the Jordan River.”

Mark 1:5 is comprised of two independent clauses joined together by the conjunction καί. The first clause, governed by the imperfect ἐξεπορεύετο, describes those going out to see John at the Jordan River. The second, governed by the imperfect ἐβαπτίζοντο describes the what transpired when they joined John in the wilderness: they “were being baptized by him in the Jordan River.”

In the syntax of vs. 15, the second clause is modified further by the participial phrase ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν. Given the placement of the participle in relation to the governing verb ἐβαπτίζοντο, it seems likely that ἐξομολογούμενοι functions adverbially. Therefore, ἐξομολογούμενοι should be seen as coinciding with ἐβαπτίζοντο, at least as far

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<sup>21</sup> Rodney Decker, drawing from BDAG, writes that John was preaching “that baptism is a necessity.” Rodney Decker, *Mark 1-8: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor University Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Wallace considers (rightly in my opinion) μετανοίας to be a “descriptive genitive.” See Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1996), 80.

as the Markan author is concerned. Undoubtedly, those who were baptized confessed their sins *before* undergoing the ritual. But in writing the way he has, the Markan author is tying baptism and confession together inextricably. Unfortunately, by its ignoring of the way in which the text reads the CBP has missed this altogether.

### ***“In the holy Spirit” or “with the Divine Guide” (Mark 1:8)?***

**Greek:** ἐγὼ ἐβάπτισα ὑμᾶς ὕδατι, αὐτὸς δὲ βαπτίσει ὑμᾶς ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

**My translation:** “I baptized you in water, but he will baptize you in the holy Spirit.”

**CBP:** “I have baptized you with water, but He shall baptize you with the Divine Guide.”

In a bewildering move, the translators of the CBP rendered πνεύματι ἁγίῳ not as “holy Spirit,” the way in which most English translations do, but as “Divine Guide.” This is also the way in which the CBP translates τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον in Mark 3:29 and τὸ πνεῦμα in Mark 1:10 and 1:12. However, when πνεύματι ἁγίῳ appears in Matthew 3:11<sup>23</sup> it is translated as “God’s will” and when it appears in Luke 3:16<sup>24</sup> it renders it as “Holy Spirit.” As both the Matthean and Lukan authors utilized Mark as a source for some of the baptism narrative, it is wildly inconsistent to translate a single phrase in three entirely different ways.

### ***“In you I am pleased” or the “Son whom I value greatly” (Mark 1:11)?***

**Greek:** καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα.

**My translation:** “And a voice came from the sky, ‘You are my Son, the beloved; in you I am pleased.’”

**CBP:** “A voice came from heaven declaring, ‘You are my beloved Son whom I value greatly.’”

As Jesus is coming out of the waters of his baptism, the Spirit descends upon him (cf. Mark 1:10) and a voice from the sky declares to Jesus, Σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα. The first clause is fairly straightforward to translate and the CBP’s rendering is in line with other English translations (i.e. ESV, NASB, etc.). The second clause is also simple to translate. The aorist εὐδόκησα is from εὐδοκέω, a verb that essentially means “to consider something good.”<sup>25</sup> Connotatively it may refer to taking pleasure in something or someone and is used this way numerous times in both the LXX and the New Testament.<sup>26</sup> For reasons unknown, the CBP translates εὐδόκησα as “I value greatly.” While one could perhaps infer that one in whom someone is pleased is also one who is valued greatly, this is not what the Markan author has written. Had he desired to do so, he would have perhaps used the verb τιμάω, a word that suggests honoring. A related word, τίμιος, is used in the New Testament to describe something considered of great value.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “Matthew 1-9 (Translated),” [https://www.conservapedia.com/Matthew\\_1-9\\_\(Translated\)](https://www.conservapedia.com/Matthew_1-9_(Translated)).

<sup>24</sup> “Luke 1-8 (Translated),” [https://www.conservapedia.com/Luke\\_1-8\\_\(Translated\)](https://www.conservapedia.com/Luke_1-8_(Translated)).

<sup>25</sup> BDAG, s.v. “εὐδοκέω.”

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 2 Samuel 22:20, Isaiah 62:4, Matthew 17:5, 1 Corinthians 10:5, Hebrews 10:6, etc.

<sup>27</sup> BDAG, s.v. “τίμιος.”

This scene also appears in both the Gospels of Matthew (3:17) and Luke (3:22) and both retain the aorist εὐδόκησα. However, the CBP does not render the verb “I value greatly” but as “I am very pleased” or “I am pleased.” While this is in keeping with the meaning of εὐδόκησα, it does reveal yet another inconsistency in the way in which the CBP operates.

### *“Cast Out” or “Led” (Mark 1:12)?*

**Greek:** Καὶ εὐθὺς τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτὸν ἐκβάλλει εἰς τὴν ἔρημον.

**My translation:** “And then the Spirit cast him out into the wilderness.”

**CBP:** “The Divine Guide then led Jesus into the desert.”

Mark 1:12 is a relatively simple sentence in Greek with but one verb governing the clause: the third person singular of ἐκβάλλω, a compound word comprised of ἐκ + βάλλω. Wherever it is used in the Markan Gospel, it conveys a sense of forcefulness or urgency. For example, it is the verb used repeatedly in exorcism stories (cf. Mark 1:34, 39; 3:15, 22, 23; 6:13; 7:26; 9:18, 28, 38). And in the story of the cleansing of the leper (Mark 1:40-45), it is used in a clause along with the participle ἐμβριμησάμενος to convey the urgency with which Jesus sends the healed man to the priest (Mark 1:43).

This sense, clear in Mark, is missing from the CBP. Rather than rendering ἐκβάλλει as major translations often do (i.e. “drove him out” – ESV; “impelled Him to go out” – NASB), the CBP has a reading that appears to be an attempt to bring the Markan text into conformity with the reading of the Matthean Gospel: Τότε ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνήχθη εἰς τὴν ἔρημον ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος πειρασθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ διαβόλου (Matthew 4:1; cf. Luke 4:1). In the Matthean redaction of the Markan Gospel, the forceful and active ἐκβάλλει has been exchanged for the softer and passive ἀνήχθη.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, the CBP, in attempting to harmonize the Synoptic accounts, has muted the Markan voice.

### *“Repent” or “Change Your Hearts” (Mark 1:15)?*

**Greek:** καὶ λέγων ὅτι Πεπλήρωται ὁ καιρὸς καὶ ἤγγικεν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ· μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦτε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ.

**My translation:** “[A]nd saying, ‘The time has been fulfilled and the reign of God has come near: repent and believe in the good news.’”

**CBP:** “He said, ‘The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Change your hearts and believe the good news.’”

Following the arrest of John, Jesus returns to Galilee to begin his ministry and to preach. In his preaching, he makes two commands: μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεῦτε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. The first of the two commands is easily recognizable to any first year Greek student. The imperative μετανοεῖτε comes from μετανοέω, a compound verb comprised of μετά + νοέω. Literally, the verb means “to change one’s mind” or “to change one’s

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<sup>28</sup> Matthew, in so doing, also rids himself of Mark’s historic present, as he is wont to do.

thinking.” This makes ironic the rendering of the CBP – “Change your hearts” – given that a note on guideline three (see above) says that “English translations fail to use the word ‘illogical’ where appropriate, and under-utilize the term ‘mind.’” The verb μετανοέω is used only twice in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 1:15, 6:12) and in both instances the CBP has missed an opportunity to refer to the “mind” (νοῦς) even though it is implicit in the root of the verb. Again, this exhibits a problematic lack of consistency.

### ***“Sabbath” or “Holy Day” (Mark 1:21)?***

**Greek:** Καὶ εἰσπορεύονται εἰς Καφαρναοῦμ· καὶ εὐθὺς τοῖς σάββασιν εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν ἐδίδασκεν.

**My translation:** “And they came to Capernaum; and then on the sabbath, having entered the synagogue, he was teaching.”

**CBP:** “They went to Capernaum and as soon as He arrived He entered the synagogue on the holy day to teach.”

Following the first calling narrative of the Gospel (i.e. Mark 1:16-20), Jesus and his entourage enter the city of Capernaum and, on the sabbath, enter a synagogue where he taught. The word “sabbath” is not a translation but a transliteration of the Greek σάββασιν.<sup>29</sup> It refers to the seventh day of the week which in Jewish custom was a day of rest. The CBP translates σάββασιν with the words “holy day,” a phrase far too general to adequately render the meaning of the word. While undoubtedly the sabbath was a “holy day,” the term refers to a very *specific* day. The CBP misses this. What is curious is that when σάββατον appears elsewhere in the Markan Gospel, the CBP renders it as “Sabbath,” not “holy day” (cf. Mark 2:23-24, 27-28; 3:2, 3; etc.).

## **V. Conclusion**

Many more examples could be considered. It suffices to say that the CBP represents a problematic translation that appears to have been done hastily and without any real knowledge of or appreciation for the text of the Gospel of Mark as it was written. Moreover, there is nothing “conservative” about its approach and, in fact, seems to come from a desire to mute the voice of the Markan author to serve an ideology. If conservatives desire to have their work taken seriously then more attention must be paid to the text *as it is written* rather than how one wishes it had been.

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<sup>29</sup> On the reasons why Mark has used the plural of σάββατον rather than the singular, see Decker, 24.