

## Justice vs. Righteousness: A Contextualized Analysis of “tsedeq” in the KJV (English) and RVR (Spanish)<sup>1)</sup>

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It is a well-known fact that translations of any text are never neutral or objective. This is equally true of translations of the Bible. For many years the Christian Church lived under the illusion that the translations of the biblical text it was using were free from biases, ideologies, and interpretation. It is now recognized, that minimally speaking, every translation is “interpretation.” And yet others would even go so far as to argue that every translation is “treason”, as suggested by the Italian saying *traduttore traditore* — “The translator is a traitor.”<sup>2)</sup>

Eugene Nida has alerted us to the three basic principles of semantic correspondence which must underlie all adequate semantic analysis: (1) No word (or semantic unit) ever has exactly the same meaning in two different utterances; (2) there are no complete synonyms within a language; (3) there are no exact correspondences between related words in different languages. In other words, perfect communication is impossible, and all communication is one of degree.<sup>3)</sup>

It is also recognized that every translation of the Bible is a serious attempt to provide a most accurate translation of the ancient text. The translator or team of translators make every effort to transmit the meaning of the ancient text into a modern target language. However, this translation process does not take place in a

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- 2) Randall C. Bailey and Tina Pippin, eds., “Race, Class and the Politics of Bible Translation”, *Semeia* 76 (1996); Stanley Porter and Richard Hess, eds., *Translating the Bible-Problems and Prospects*, JSNT, Supplement Series 173 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Mark Strauss, *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998); D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998); David Jobling, ed., “Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts”, *Semeia* 59 (1992); William Smalley, *Translation as Mission* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1991).
- 3) Eugene A. Nida, “Analysis of Meaning and Dictionary Meaning”, *IJAL* 24 (1958), 281.

vacuum. It is part of a historical process, carried out in a particular context at a particular time. This means that a number of factors play into the exercise of translation. Among these factors, I suggest that the more critical ones are realities of race, class, gender, life-histories, theological persuasions, political alliances, cultural distinctives and, last but not least, marketing issues. These specific factors contribute to the “ideology” as well as to the “worldview” of a translator or team of translators. It can be safely assumed that every translation ever done of the biblical text exhibits a definite “ideology”, whether conscious or unconscious. This means, then, that there is no such thing as an “immaculate” translation of the Bible. Having participated on two translation teams for two different Bibles in the Spanish language,<sup>4)</sup> I am thoroughly convinced both on theoretical and experiential grounds that neutral, objective translations are an impossibility, and to a degree undesirable. At best, I can speak of honest translations, when and if the presuppositions, preunderstandings, theological agendas and marketing pressures are explained clearly in the preface of the translation offered. Whatever philosophy of translation one adopts, whether it be “formal equivalency”, “dynamic/functional equivalency” or some variation of these, one cannot escape the fact that ideology will play an important role in the process of translation as well as in the final product. As Stanley Porter has stated, “The history of Bible translation is charged with ideological issues.”<sup>5)</sup>

Once the presence of ideology is acknowledged, the next step is to suggest a theory of translation that will help in addressing the problem described below. Perhaps one of the fundamental areas of concern in any translation is that of achieving a healthy degree of cultural equivalence. This is critical so that the “receptor language” can communicate as accurately as possible the intended meaning in the “source language.” Ernst Wendland’s theory is very helpful and insightful in this regard. He argues that the formal and functional acceptability of translations may be determined on the basis of the interaction of four closely related and mutually interacting variables: fidelity, intelligibility, idiomaticity, and proximity.<sup>6)</sup>

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4) The two Translation projects were: *Nueva Versión Internacional*, sponsored by the International Bible Society and released in February of 1999; and *La Biblia en Lenguaje Sencillo*, sponsored by Sociedades Bíblicas Unidas, due to be released at the end of the year 2000.

5) Stanley Porter, “The Contemporary English Version and the Ideology of Translation”, S. Porter and R. Hess, eds., *Translating the Bible-Problems and Prospects*, 18.

1. Fidelity addresses the issues concerned with the accurate communication of the author's intended message in the "source language" text.

2. Intelligibility focuses on the understanding of the message by hearers in the "receptor language."

3. Idiomaticity attends to our concern with the "naturalness" of the message as heard by hearers in the "receptor language."

4. Proximity considers the structure of the message in the "source language" and the desirability of preserving its distinctiveness.

These four variables need to be present at all times, and yet, no single solution can claim complete equivalence in translation, that is, in all functional aspects of the message –form, meaning, impact, connotation, naturalness, history, lifestyle, and world view. The translator accepts the responsibility to utilize every available heuristic "so that the receptors can participate much more fully in the communication process whereby the seed of the Word is sown and takes root in the soil of a new linguistic and cultural setting."<sup>7)</sup>

## 1. The Problem

Having offered a theory of translation and having established that "ideology" is an integral part of any process used to translate the biblical text, I will now introduce the problem that I wish to address in this paper. The problem has many facets to it and therefore needs a multifaceted approach to address it. One of the facets has to do with two modern languages: Spanish and English. Another one has to do with the understanding of a specific Hebrew term as it appears in a variety of contexts in the biblical text. And yet another has to do with the consequences of translation choices for the theology embraced by the Christian Church.

The problem or issue becomes readily apparent when one compares the most influential translations of the Bible for the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking

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6) Ernst R. Wendland, "Culture and the Form/Function Dichotomy in the Evaluation of Translation Acceptability", Johannes P. Louw, ed., *Meaningful Translation* (Reading, UK: United Bible Societies, 1991), 8-40. See also Ernst R. Wendland, *Language, Society and Bible Translation* (Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa, 1985).

7) Ernst R. Wendland, "Culture and the Form/Function Dichotomy in the Evaluation of Translation Acceptability", 40.

worlds: the KJV for the English-speaking world and the Reina Valera Revisada (henceforth: RVR) for the Spanish speaking world. Anyone who is familiar with both translations immediately becomes aware of a significant difference between the two texts.<sup>8)</sup> As one reads the RVR one is struck by the number of times the word “*justicia*” (justice) appears in the text. A more careful comparison reveals that in the majority of the cases where RVR uses “*justicia*” the KJV uses “righteousness.” Two examples, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament will suffice now as illustrations of the apparent innocent difference. In Jeremiah 33:16 the KJV reads: “In those days, shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name by which she shall be called, the lord, our righteousness.” By contrast the RVR reads “*Jehová, justicia nuestra*”, which means “Jehova, our justice.” Secondly, in Matthew 5:6 the KJV reads: “Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled”, whereas RVR reads: “*Bienaventurados los que tienen hambre y sed de justicia, porque ellos serán saciados*”, which means “Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied.”

A more comprehensive reading of both texts will reveal that initial impressions can be corroborated by a simple statistical search. A computer search for the word “justice” in the KJV finds that “justice” appears only 28 times in the entire Bible. A further interesting fact is that of those 28 uses of the term justice, none are to be found in the New Testament translation of the KJV. All 28 occurrences of this English word appear in the Old Testament. To express this another way, people who during their entire lifetime read the New Testament of the KJV would have never come across the word “justice” in their reading. More will be said about the meaning and consequences of this reality later on.

The same search carried out in the RVR reveals that the word *justicia* (justice) appears a total of 370 times. The term can be found 101 times in the New Testament. This means that the term is used more than 13 times as often in the RVR as compared with its use in the KJV. Once again, the theological implications of this contextual difference in translation will be dealt with later.

A further comparison can be done on this basis by looking at other English and

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8) This was recognized as early as 1978 by my former colleague in Argentina, Dr. Sidney Rooy. See Sidney Rooy, “Righteousness and Justice”, *The Responsibility of Christian Institutions of Higher Education to Justice in the International Economic Order* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, 1980), 1-16.

Spanish translations:

English		Spanish	
<b>KJV</b>	<b>28x</b>	<b>RVR</b>	<b>370x</b>
<b>JPS:</b>	<b>80x(only OT)</b>	<b>DHH</b>	<b>277x</b>
<b>TEV:</b>	<b>103x</b>	<b>NVI</b>	<b>426x</b>
<b>ASV:</b>	<b>116x</b>		
<b>RSV:</b>	<b>125x</b>		
<b>NKJV:</b>	<b>130x</b>		
<b>NRSV:</b>	<b>131x</b>		
<b>NIV:</b>	<b>134x</b>		
<b>NAB:</b>	<b>221x</b>		
<b>NJB:</b>	<b>253x</b>		

The Spanish translation *Nueva Versión Internacional* (NVI) represents the most recent translation done by a team of evangelical Latin American scholars. This translation which was released in February of 1999 demonstrates that an even wider gulf exists between the English and Spanish translations regarding the use of the term “justice.” This is further substantiated by a look at two standard translations in German and French. The Revised Martin Luther Text (1985) has the word “*gerechtigkeit*” (justice) 306 times. The French Nouvelle Version Second Révisée has “*justice*” 380 times, and the Latin Vulgate including the so-called Apocryphal books utilizes “*iustitia*” over 400 times.

This simple illustration of the difference in translation between the KJV and RVR (as well as Latin, German and French translations) raises a number of questions. These questions cannot be answered by merely looking at the translations, nor by relying on mere statistical analysis. As mentioned above, the problem needs to be considered from many different angles.

## 2. Proposed Course of Action

The contextual differences between translations cannot be addressed exclusively from the point of view of the modern English and Spanish languages. It is first of all

necessary to ascertain what are the significant Hebrew and Greek words that have a direct impact on the way a translation is completed. For this particular case, I have chosen to concentrate on a particular Hebrew word. This word is *tsedeq*. There are many other Hebrew words that could be analyzed, especially as they appear together with *tsedeq*.<sup>9)</sup> However, that would be fertile ground for a doctoral dissertation. The limits of this paper do not allow us to spread our wings so widely. The primary reason for choosing *tsedeq* is that it is precisely this term that the KJV consistently translates as “righteousness” whereas the RVR translates it as justice. So our first task is to try and define the meaning or range of meanings of the Hebrew term *tsedeq*.

A second step will be to try and ascertain the history and meaning of the term “righteousness” as it developed in the English language. Questions of usage over time need to be considered. How was the term understood when the translators of the KJV utilized it? Did the translators inherit the term from previous translations? Did the meaning of the term change over time? What connotations does the word have today? These and other matters need to be considered when one attempts to understand the contextual differences of two translations and the implications of these differences for the Christian church.

A third step will be to analyze some “key” texts in which the term *tsedeq* is used in the Hebrew text. The purpose of this study will be to try and offer what would be the most relevant and accurate contextual interpretation of the term in its given context. As these texts are analyzed, a constant comparison will be made between the KJV and RVR with a view to understanding the theological implications of each translation.

A final step will be to offer some preliminary suggestions based on the analysis done thus far. These suggestions will also consider the present state of understanding of these terms and how the theology of the church has been influenced by the use of either “righteousness” or “justice”.

### 3. Meaning of the term “*tsedeq*”

The scholarly literature on *tsedeq* is, as might be expected, quite vast. This

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9) The translation of *mishpat* (justice) in the KJV has been questioned by Frank Gaebelin, “Old Testament Foundations for Living More Simply”, Ron Sider, ed., *Living More Simply: Biblical Principles and Practical Models* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 27-39.

Hebrew term has been the subject of many studies.<sup>10)</sup> These studies demonstrate a wide variety of suggestions regarding the most original and accurate meaning of the term in question. This of course is due to a number of factors, including the particular biases of each of the scholars. However, it is important to point out at the outset that *tsedeq* is used in a number of different contexts and in many different literary genres. This means that the range of semantic meanings of the term can be quite wide. Therefore it should come as no surprise that the term can be understood, interpreted and translated in a variety of ways.

A cursory look at the standard dictionaries reveals the following understandings of the term *tsedeq*:<sup>11)</sup>

- a. BDB:<sup>12)</sup> rightness, righteousness; 1. what is right, just, normal; rightness, justness. 2. righteousness. 3. righteousness, justice in a case. 4. rightness, in speech. 5. righteousness, as ethically right. 6. righteousness as vindicated.
- b. K-B:<sup>13)</sup> 1. the right, normal thing. 2. righteousness, rightness (of law). 3. justice.
- c. K-B-1996:<sup>14)</sup> 1.a. accuracy, what is correct; b. the right thing, what is

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10) A few examples of these studies are: H. G. Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, eds., *Justice and Righteousness*, JSOTS 137 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); Ahuva Ho, *Sedeq and Sedaqah in the Hebrew Bible*, American University Series VII, 78 (New York: Peter Lang, 1991); J. Krasovec, *La Justice (SDQ) de Dieu dans la Bible Hébraïque et L'Interprétation Juive et Chrétienne*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 76 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1988); John J. Scullion, "Sedeq-Sedaqah in Isaiah cc. 40-66", *UF* 3 (1971), 335-348; K. Koch, "tsedeq, Ser fiel a la comunidad", E. Jenni and C. Westermann, *Diccionario Teológico Manual del Antiguo Testamento, II* (Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad, 1985), 640-668; David J. Reimer, "ts-d-q" Willem van Gemeren, ed., *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 744-769; H. Stigers, "tsedeq", R. Harris, G. Archer Jr. and B. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament II* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 752-755; M. Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

11) A word of clarification is due regarding the cognate words. Terms such as the verb *tsadaq*, the feminine noun *tsedaqah*, the masculine noun *tsaddiq*, and the adjective *tsaddiq* will not be considered as part of this study. There is much disagreement as to whether there is in fact any difference in meaning between *tsedeq* and *tsedaqah*. It is our contention that if there is any difference it is not significant enough to affect the general argument presented in this particular study.

12) F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 841-842.

13) L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 794-795.

14) L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, revised by W. Baumgartner and J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and*

- honest. 2. equity, what is right. 3. communal loyalty, conduct loyal to the community. 4. salvation, well-being.
- d. Schökel:<sup>15)</sup> Justice, right(legal); honesty, innocence; merit; victory. a. As a noun. Justice.

It is interesting to note that there are definite similarities between the suggestions offered by all these dictionaries, but there are also differences. The most notable difference is that the one dictionary produced in Spain by Luis Alonso Schökel, a most distinguished biblical scholar, has used the word “justice” as the first and primary meaning for the Hebrew term *tsedeq*. In fact, I wish to draw attention to the fact that in a more extended explanation of the term, the dictionary mentions that as a noun, *tsedeq* means primarily “justice.”<sup>16)</sup>

One cannot limit oneself to so-called “dictionary meanings” of words. Nida has also reminded us that it is necessary to look at the sum total of the contexts in which a given word is used in order to arrive at a more accurate meaning or meanings of that lexical unit.<sup>17)</sup> For this I can resort to the excellent theological wordbooks that have been written. These make a more serious attempt at understanding the range of semantic fields in which a word is used.

The different comprehensive theological articles written on the word *tsedeq* obviously treat the entire range of cognate words that stem from the root *ts-d-q*. As has been mentioned in footnote 6, however, I have agreed with those scholars who see no significant difference in meaning between *tsedeq* and *tsedaqah*. Reimer has correctly asserted that “...*tsedeq* and *tsedaqah* are completely synonymous terms.”<sup>18)</sup> Therefore, the following discussion will concentrate primarily on the term *tsedeq*, but will not exclude *tsedaqah*.

Research has demonstrated that the semantic range of the word *tsedeq* is quite wide. No one English word is able to capture the many and varied uses and meanings of this word. Though one can suggest some generalizations regarding the term, based on morphology, it is much more advisable to derive the various

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*Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1996), 1004-1005.

15) Luis Alonso Schökel, *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1994), 632-633 (My Translation).

16) *Ibid.*, 632.

17) E. A. Nida, “Analysis of Meaning and Dictionary Meaning”, *IJAL* 24 (1958), 282.

18) David Reimer, “ts-d-q”, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 3, 767.



semantic nuances from the different contexts in which the word is used. For example, the idea of “legitimate” or “just” with regard to weights and measures is present in the Pentateuchal literature. This meaning is also present with respect to ordinances and sacrifices in the Psalms. This immediately suggests that *tsedeg* often contains a forensic sense. This is quite evident in the use of *tsedeg* in the book of Job, particularly as Job argues for his innocence.<sup>19)</sup>

Another meaning that surfaces from this term is the idea of proper order and right behavior. This can be applied both to individual situations or to communal contexts. *tsedeg* is often used to describe proper conduct and the kind of behavior that is socially acceptable. It can also depict Yahweh’s order and the kinds of social disorders that occur when the order of Yahweh is not followed. There is a real sense in which the right behavior of a human being is to be commensurate with divine *tsedeg*.

A significant use of the term *tsedeg* relates to the concept of salvation, liberation, victory and deliverance. This is especially true of God’s saving action. In the Psalms, God’s *tsedeg* comes to the aid of cities, the oppressed, the abandoned, the afflicted, etc. This intervention of God on behalf of the ones in need is expressed through the word *tsedeg*. This is also true in Isaiah 40-55. Scullion has concluded that:

In Isaiah cc. 40-55 *tsedeg*-*tsedaqah* are constantly used for Yahweh’s saving activity and its effects in the life of his covenant people. And one of the most important of these effects was the peace, harmony and well-being of the community. *tsedeg*-*tsedaqah* very often connote prosperity in these chapters. This conclusion fits in well with that of H. H. Schmid in his detailed study of *tsedeg*: “*ts-d-q* in Second Isaiah then means Yahweh’s world order in salvation history, an order that is based on creation and extends over the proclamation of the divine will, the rousing of Cyrus and the ‘servant’ right up to the coming of the salvation of the future.”<sup>20)</sup>

In other words, it is evident from various contexts that *tsedeg*’s meaning goes beyond a forensic and proper conduct domain and includes a salvific connotation

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19) Forensic sense of *tsedaqah* can also be found in 2 Samuel 8:15; 15:4.

20) J. J. Scullion, “*tsedeg*-*tsedaqah* in Isaiah cc. 40-66”, *UF* 3 (1971), 341. Compare with H. H. Schmid, *Gerechtigkeit als Weltordnung* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1969), 134.

that needs to be recognized in any translation of the Hebrew Bible.

Finally, a related meaning to the previous ones is the meaning of justice. There are many contexts in which the best rendition of *tsedeq* is achieved through the word or concept “justice.” This is especially true when *tsedeq* is used in parallelism with *mishpat*. This last Hebrew term is also a rich one meaning, among other things: decision, legal decision, legal case, justice, and right (i.e., the right of an individual). When these two terms are used together, they often express the obligation of the king to be just and to insure that justice is meted out in the community. In the prophets, there is a constant concern that justice be practiced both by royalty and by the religious leaders. It is in these contexts where a right relationship between God and the people needs to be maintained on the basis of the existence of *tsedeq*.

Social justice is also at the heart of the meaning of *tsedeq*. In contexts such as Isaiah 1, it is quite clear that the prophet insists that *tsedeq* needs to be present in order for restoration to take place for the dispossessed and the marginalized. The prophet cries out:

See how Jerusalem, once so faithful, has become a prostitute. Once the home of justice and righteousness, she is now filled with murderers...Your leaders are rebels, the companions of thieves. All of them take bribes and refuse to defend the orphans and the widows...Afterward I will give you good judges and wise counselors like the ones you used to have. Then Jerusalem will again be called the Home of Justice and the Faithful City. (Is. 1:21, 23, 26)<sup>21)</sup>

As will be seen in specific key passages below, the concern for social justice is expressed many times in the Hebrew text by the use of the hendiadys formed by *tsedeq* and *mishpat*. Reimer is correct to suggest that “*together they represent the ideal of social justice, an ideal lauded by the Queen of Sheba concerning Solomon’s kingship in I Kgs 10:9, forming part of the excellence of his impressive administration.*”<sup>22)</sup>

The evidence thus far presented, albeit incomplete, demonstrates that there is no one, single meaning for the word *tsedeq*. It is quite impossible to reduce the term to

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21) *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House, 1996).

22) David Reimer, “ts-d-q”, *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* 3, 750.

a linear, flat, and one-dimensional meaning. This is what makes the translation of the term quite difficult. At the same time, one must embrace the rich multiple-meanings reality of *tsedeq* and allow the translation of the Hebrew text of the Bible to reflect that. It is for this reason that I do not propose at this time a single, overarching suggestion regarding *tsedeq*. One could, I suppose, come close to that by suggesting something like “communal responsibility”, or “being faithful to the community.” These phrases are attempts at encompassing the semantic range of the term. And yet I would not be willing to venture that they would cover all contexts. There is, however, in the evidence presented a clear indication that the Hebrew term has more of a relational and communal flavor, as opposed to a moral individualistic sense.

In light of this, the question regarding the KJV’s overwhelming choice of the term “righteousness” as the translation for *tsedeq* needs to be addressed. For example, the word *tsedeq* appears in the Old Testament a total of 119 times. Of those 119 instances, KJV has translated it “righteousness” 82 times; “righteous” 10 times and “right” 3 times. The percentages are much higher if one includes *tsedaqah* and other cognate words of the root *ts-d-q*. Consequently, as stated in the introduction, before any judgments are made or conclusions reached it is necessary to delve into questions of the original meaning of the word “righteousness”, history of the translation of the KJV, and current understandings of the term.

#### 4. History and Meaning of the Term “Righteousness”

The meaning of the term “righteousness” found in contemporary English language dictionaries is generally tied to a theological or religious context. In one dictionary the main entry states that righteousness is the “quality or condition of being righteous; conformity of life or conduct to the requirements of the divine or moral law; *spec. in Theol.* applied e.g. to the perfection of the Divine Being, and to the justification of man through the Atonement.”<sup>23</sup>) Another dictionary adds the ideas of purity of heart and rectitude of life. It also underscores the concept of conformity of life to divine law. Matters of holiness and holy principles are also

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23) *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 1739.

mentioned in conjunction with “righteousness.”<sup>24)</sup> Still another work emphasizes the quality or state of “being” righteous. The idea of uprightness and rectitude come into play in this nuance. And in a third entry it includes “the state of being rightful or just.”<sup>25)</sup>

It is quite clear that the modern understanding of the term is that which suggests first of all a state of being. By this I mean that “righteousness” has more of a stative connotation than an active connotation. Secondly, the various definitions always portray the term in relationship to divine and moral law. Therefore a righteous person, or one who demonstrates righteousness, is one who is in right standing with God, who is justified by God and who exhibits the qualities of holiness, purity, uprightness and rectitude. Finally, the definitions offered suggest a very individualistic meaning for the term. There does not seem to be present in this more contemporary understanding of the term a corporate element nor a community emphasis. In summary, to state the ideas in terms of opposite categories: Righteousness is not active but passive, it is theologically bound, it is not secularly relevant, and it is individualistic rather than community-oriented. I recognize that casting the term in these black-and-white categories may lead to an overstatement of the conclusions. Nevertheless, it is my contention that the popular contemporary understanding of the term falls within these categories.

The question that still needs to be addressed is whether this was the way the translators of the KJV used and understood the term. This of course is never easy to determine, since we cannot ask them directly. We can also suspect that the different men involved in the translation process may have had slightly different views on how to use the term and how to best translate the word *tsedeq*. We are indeed faced with a variation of the well known biblical hermeneutical problem of “authorial intent” once again.

One of the first problems we encounter as we try to discover the meaning of “righteousness”, and how it was used in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, is that up until 1604 the English language did not have English dictionaries as we know them today. Prior to this, what was available were glossaries, vocabularies and a number of bilingual dictionaries. These cannot be equated to a monolingual

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24) *Webster's Universal Dictionary of the English Language II* (New York: The World Syndicate Publishing Company, 1936), 1430.

25) *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*, 2nd., Unabridged (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1935), 2148.

dictionary that arranges words in alphabetical order and tries to systematically define the meaning of a word by using other words in the same language. In this sense the English language was quite behind other languages such as French, Italian and German. It is quite astonishing to think that Shakespeare did not have access to a full dictionary while he was composing some of the most outstanding English literature. Because dictionaries as we know them did not exist at that time, Winchester has stated:

If the language that so inspired Shakespeare had limits, if its words had definable origins, spellings, pronunciations, **meanings** — then no single book existed that established them, defined them, and set them down...The English language was spoken and written — but at the time of Shakespeare it was not defined, not **fixed**.<sup>26)</sup>

The lack of a systematic treatment of any given word makes it doubly difficult to discern its meaning at any given time. As Lancashire has stated, speaking of the English-speaking world in the 16th century, “most persons alive at this time would not have understood the question, ‘what does this word *mean*?’”, as anything other than a request for a translation, an etymology, or gesture pointing to something in the world denoted by that word.”<sup>27)</sup>

A possible help in this regard can be sought in a modern reconstruction of the English language. A project undertaken by the University of Michigan has developed what is called a *Middle English Dictionary*.<sup>28)</sup> This dictionary attempts to discover the meaning of English words as they were used from approximately 1100 to 1500. Numerous sources of English literature from that time period are taken into consideration in order to create lexical meanings of a given word. This dictionary suggests that the word “righteousness” most likely comes from the term *right-wisnesse*. According to this modern attempt to reconstruct the meaning of a term from several texts, *right-wisnesse* meant “justice; fairness, and impartiality.” What remains unclear to this point, it seems to me, is the transition from

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26) Simon Winchester, *The Professor and the Mad Man* (New York: Harper Collings Publishers, 1995), 82-83.

27) Ian Lancashire, *What Renaissance Dictionaries Tell us about Lexical Meaning*. Available from: [http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/chwp/lancash2/lan2\\_3.htm](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/chwp/lancash2/lan2_3.htm). Accessed 10 January 2000.

28) *Middle English Dictionary* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1984).

“right-wiseness” to “righteousness” as used in the biblical text. As will be argued below, the Puritan understanding of the term “righteousness” seems to have determined how the reader of the late 16th and earlier 17th centuries internalized the term.

Not having a precise source to turn to concerning the meaning and usage of the term “righteousness” in the 16th and 17th centuries, our next step is to look at some of the factors that had an influence on the production of the magnificent literary piece we know as the KJV.

The political and social scene during the early 17th century in England was quite tumultuous. By 1603, when Queen Elizabeth I died, England had established itself as the major player in the concert of nations in Europe. One clear symbol of this reality is the fact that the Church of England had severed all ties with the Church of Rome. This did not mean that total unity among the religious parties existed in England. In fact, one of the urgent tasks that King James I had to attend to was the division that existed over which version of the Bible was going to be the so-called “authorized version”, legitimized by political authority. The present situation was that people were not using either the Bishops’ Bible (1568) nor the Great Bible (ca. 1535) that had been installed in the churches. The people had turned their attention toward and were buying the editions of the Geneva Bible (1560) that were being produced copiously by the presses of England and the Netherlands.

At the suggestion of Dr. John Reynolds, President of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and spokesman for the Puritan group, King James I decided to support the production of a new translation and proposed that

this be done by the best learned in both Universities, after them to be reviewed by the Bishops, and the chief learned of the Church; from them to be presented to the Priuie-Councell; and lastly to be ratified by his Royal authoritie, and so this whole Church to be bound unto it, and none other.<sup>29)</sup>

It is evident from this that a very important agenda item in the production of the KJV was to have one and only one legitimized version that would unite all the people under one text. As is usual for any translation project, certain rules and guidelines are established and then they are to be adhered to. For our present study,

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29) As quoted in *A Ready-Reference History of the English Bible* (New York: American Bible Society, 1971), 22.

the following guidelines for the translators of the KJV are pertinent:

1. The ordinary Bible read in church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit.
2. The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, viz. the word "church" not to be translated "congregation." (The Greek word can be translated either way.)
3. When a word hath divers significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by most of the ancient fathers.
4. No marginal notes at all to be affixed, but only for the explanation of the Hebrew or Greek words, which cannot without some circumlocution be so briefly and fitly expressed in the text.<sup>30)</sup>

Moreover, it is important for our purposes to recognize the influence of the Bishops' Bible as well as other versions such as Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch (Great Bible) and the Geneva Bible. Translations in other languages were also consulted, including the Valera's Spanish Bible (1602), the precursor to the RVR.<sup>31)</sup> Recognizing the fact that the Bishops' Bible was used as the basic text, it is generally agreed that the changes incorporated into the KJV were most influenced by the Geneva Bible.

Regarding the translation of the word *tsedeq*, the Bishops' Bible never uses the word "justice" to translate this term. Therefore, since this text was to serve as the basis for the KJV translators, it is not surprising that "justice" or other cognates were hardly ever used to translate *tsedeq*. It is also interesting to note that the Geneva Bible does use the word "justice" a few times. In fact, *tsedeq* is translated by the word "justice", 12 more times in the Geneva Bible than in the KJV. It is my conclusion that the Geneva Bible made an effort to express the wider range of meaning of *tsedeq*. So I suggest that the KJV translators had the opportunity to build on the work of the Geneva Bible and to incorporate some of the advances regarding the meaning of *tsedeq*, but they did not do so. The instructions were clear: the Bishops' Bible was to be followed as much as possible and altered as little as possible.

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30) For the complete list see Gustavus S. Paine, *The Men Behind the KJV* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 70-71.

31) The Spanish Valera of 1602 is a revision done by Cipriano de Valera of the 1569 Spanish version done by Casiodoro de Reina. The Spanish Valera of 1602 was then revised again in 1862, 1909 and 1960. The RVR is the 1960 revision. There is now a Reina-Valera 1995 revision.

A number of other factors determined the lack of flexibility in the translation process of the KJV as well. First and perhaps foremost, the production of the new translation was a project ordered by the King. One cannot but suspect that any so-called questionable translations or any translations that would call into question political policies would be avoided. Walter Wink has alerted us to an example of how translators working in the hire of King James were conditioned. We know that one of the reasons that King James commissioned a new translation was to counteract the “seditious ... dangerous, and trayterous” ideas expressed in the marginal notes printed in the Geneva Bible, which included endorsement of the right to disobey a tyrant.<sup>32)</sup> Wink argues that the translation of Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:38-41 is more than a translation from Greek into English. It resulted in the translation of nonviolent resistance into docility. By translating *antistenai* as simply “resist not evil”, the clear message is that total submission to any monarchical power is what Jesus intended. And yet Jesus quite often went against unjust political powers. Therefore the preferred translation would take this into account, and Wink proposes neither passivity nor violence, but a *third way*, one that is at once assertive and yet nonviolent. For example, a translation such as TEV’s “Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you” would not have represented enough insurance for the King against assertive nonviolent resistance.

Along the same lines, I suggest that one of the reasons why the translators hired by King James did not even consider incorporating the latest changes introduced by the Geneva Bible regarding *tsedeq* was that “justice” was not an issue that the King wanted people to be thinking about or even consider as part of their spiritual responsibility. Powerful words such as “justice”, “just”, “rights” and “communal faithfulness”, were not in the best interests of the King. A religious word such as “righteousness” that speaks of a state of being and not of an active, intentional responsibility towards others, especially the poor and the marginalized, is a much safer term. It is also a term that speaks more of an individual state rather than a societal or communitarian *shalom*. It is my contention that the term “righteousness” fitted the royal agenda and served the purposes of the monarchy quite well.

A third factor that exercised a significant influence on the KJV was the Puritan worldview. It is important to remember that it was Dr. John Reynolds, the spokesman for the Puritan group, who convinced King James of the need to produce

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32) Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 98-101.



a new translation that would have the approval of the whole church and would bring everybody under the authority of the new version. The Puritan concern for individual holiness, purity, and moral stature was not a significant problem for the King. However, their strong emphasis on social justice and antagonistic attitude toward the luxurious lifestyle of the court was no doubt reason for concern.<sup>33)</sup> Years later, in 1644, Puritan Samuel Rutherford published his famous manifesto *Lex, Rex, or The Law and the Prince*. In this treatise Rutherford openly challenges the King's right to stand above the law and oppress the poor. Throughout the document there are numerous times where a call is issued to the King to insure justice.<sup>34)</sup> Therefore, the Puritan agenda was not in the best interests of the King. I suggest, on this basis, that this highly politicized context certainly determined how a translation would be rendered. Once again "righteousness", which as we have seen is almost exclusively a religious term would fit the King's agenda and ideology quite well. Issues of social justice, transformation of the evil structures of society, and civic responsibility were not priorities for the King at this time.

Still another factor which had an influence, albeit tangentially, on the final outcome of the KJV was the decision to eliminate marginal notes. This started a practice in Bible translation that ultimately led to the notion that a "clean, plain, and unadorned" text was free from bias and subjectivity and therefore absolutely objective and true. There certainly were valid reasons for attempting to eliminate some of the more extreme ideologically infused marginal notes such as they existed in the Geneva Bible. On the other hand the ultimate consequence of such a practice was the development of another ideology that set the translation on a pedestal that was untouchable. Whereas marginal notes could have explained or illustrated the various nuances of the term *tsedeq*, a plain and to a degree "flat" concordance-type translation served the King's purposes quite well.

Thus, as far as can be determined, the meaning and usage of the term "righteousness" emphasized personal piety, individual holiness and moral purity. These connotations served the King well and supported the Puritan worldview and theological framework.

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33) H. G. Alexander, *Religion in England, 1558-1662* (London: University of London, 1968), 135.

34) S. Rutherford, *Lex, Rex, or The Law and the Prince* (Harrisonburg: Sprinkle Publications, 1982), 54-57, 89, 96-97.

## 5. Analysis of Critical Texts

As indicated previously, the word *tsedeq* appears in the Old Testament 119 times. This of course does not include the number of times its cognates occur in the Hebrew text. As I have analyzed various texts, I have become convinced that my contention would be strengthened if I included as evidence the 157 times that the term *tsedaqah* is used. However, in order for this study to stay within certain reasonable parameters I have limited my arguments to contexts where just *tsedeq* appears. Of the 119 occurrences of *tsedeq*, I have chosen a sample from different literary genres in order to illustrate and to expose the problem at hand.

A critical text from the deuteronomic literature for consideration is Deuteronomy 16:20. The KJV reads: “That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” The RVR reads: “*La justicia, la justicia seguirás, para que vivas y heredes la tierra que Jehová tu Dios te da.*” (Justice, and only justice, you will follow, so that you may live and inherit the land which Jehovah your God gives to you.) Other English translations have captured what the RVR suggests by also translating: “Follow justice, and justice alone” (NIV); “Justice, and only justice, you shall follow” (RSV); “Let true justice prevail” (NLT); and “Justice, and justice alone” (NEB). The entire context of this particular verse is concerned with communal responsibilities. The previous verse speaks clearly about not perverting justice, about not showing partiality and about not taking a bribe. To the modern reader of the biblical text, “following and pursuing justice” carries with it a slightly different connotation than merely something “altogether just.” It states very clearly that the covenantal relationship with God requires that justice be exercised and nurtured in society. The KJV translation waters down the impact of the repetition of the Hebrew “*tsedeq tsedeq*” placed at the very beginning of the verse. Of course the context for the KJV is already set in the previous verse (Deu 16:19) by translating it “Thou shalt not wrest judgement.” To my own surprise The New Scofield Reference Bible (1967) has seen fit to correct the KJV by introducing the phrase “Thou shalt not distort justice” in the text, and placing the KJV translation in the margin. If one of the basic requirements of a translation is to produce a similar response, I suggest that the RVR translation elicits a much more similar response to that of the original hearers of Deuteronomy. It is a translation that mobilizes a communal responsibility

in the direction of seeking justice for the “other.” And it is precisely this concern for communal justice that will enable the original hearers to live and to inherit the land. Jeffrey Tigay has commented on this verse as follows:

The injunctions of the previous verse have all been stated earlier in the Torah. Characteristically, Deuteronomy adds an exhortation pleading for the basic principle of justice and seeks to persuade its audience to follow it by emphasizing the benefits it will bring... The pursuit of justice is an indispensable condition for God’s enabling Israel to endure and thrive in the promised land.<sup>35)</sup>

Moving on to the poetical genre, I wish to consider Psalm 4:5, especially as it relates to 4:1 and the entire poem. The KJV reads: “Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord.” The RVR reads: “*Ofreced sacrificios de justicia, Y confiad en Jehová*” (Offer sacrifices of justice, and trust in Jehovah).

Two preliminary matters need to be emphasized. First of all, something that is quite clear in both translations is that the verbs to offer and to trust are in the imperative mood. In other words these are not suggestions; they are commands that are to be taken seriously. The second matter is not readily clear in English translation due to the nature of the English language. The commands are plural, that is, they are addressed not to the individual but to the community. This, of course, is evident in the English from vs. 2. Nevertheless, it is worth underscoring, if for no other reason than the fact that so many of the verses in the Psalms are lifted out of context and quoted separately in Church life.

The psalm depicts the situation of a person who is being accused and persecuted. The poet begins the poem with a strong plea, and given the context it seems much more appropriate to translate *tsedeq* in vs. 1 as justice: “Hear me when I call, God of my justice.” I concur with Kraus in that vs. 5 needs to be read in light of vs. 1, and therefore I would argue that “sacrifices of justice” fits the communal context much better. Kraus states:

If now z-b-h ts-d-q may be connected with ‘lh’ ts-d-q (v.1) –and that is obvious — then we are dealing with sacrifices by means of which the **justice**

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35) Jeffrey Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 161.

proceeding from Yahweh is acknowledged...In this connection it can only have been the meaning of z-b-h ts-d-q to bring the persecutors and the persecuted into a new social relation at a sacrifice after Yahweh's declaration of **justice** and into a social relation that corresponds to the bestowal of ts-d-q by Yahweh.<sup>36)</sup> (emphasis mine)

The issue is more about the doing of justice rather than offering sacrifices that will bring about a kind of individual morality or a state of individual holiness. Certainly these concerns are also present in *tsedeq*, but by translating or incorporating the concern for justice, the message once again is more dynamic, more communal, and results in the transformation of social relationships which in turn affect all of society.

In Psalm 50:6 the KJV reads: "And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself." Whereas RVR reads: "*Y los cielos declararán su justicia, Porque Dios es el juez.*" (And the heavens shall declare his justice, for God is the judge.) Once again Kraus alerts us to the fact that "*tsedeq here leans toward the meaning 'actual sense of justice.'*"<sup>37)</sup> If indeed God is the judge, then in fact it follows that the heavens will proclaim his justice. That justice will certainly have a moral dimension; it will include holiness, proper conduct, and all that the word or idea of "righteousness" includes. But more importantly, it also declares and requires that relationships be based on a kind of justice which enables men, women and children to relate to God and thus to each other. Without the justice that *tsedeq* bespeaks, no real relationship can develop.

A final example from the poetic literature deserves mention, at least in passing. Perhaps the most popular and influential psalm in the Church over the centuries has been Psalm 23. It is quoted over and over again in different contexts and memorized in Sunday Schools all over the world. Language has been transcended by this psalm, and people from different ethnic groups, social classes, educational backgrounds, etc. have found inspiration and comfort in the Psalm. In the KJV, Psalm 23:3 reads: "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The RVR reads: "*Confortará mi alma; Me guiará por sendas de justicia por amor de su nombre*" (He will comfort my soul; He will guide me through paths of

36) Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 1-59: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1988), 148-149.

37) *Ibid.*, 492.

justice for the love of his name.) Given the context of the entire Psalm, perhaps one could argue that “justice” is not the best rendering for *tsedeq*. It is entirely possible that the poet, in thinking of his situation, might have been thinking more along the lines of “victory” or even “salvation”, which are semantic possibilities for *tsedeq*. However, my point here is not so much to argue for a specific translation over another but to state that the reader/hearer comes away with a significantly different feeling and understanding when she/he reads “paths of justice” instead of “paths of righteousness.” Given that this is such a popular poem in the Church, it is important to understand those differences. More will be said about these in the final section of this study.

Though we could consider a number of examples from the wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible, I will conclude this section with a couple of examples from the prophetic genre. Of all the prophets, Isaiah the prophet uses the term *tsedeq* the most: a total of 25 times. As mentioned earlier, the prophet is constantly concerned for the right communal relationships, where concern for the marginalized is not overlooked.

In Isaiah 1:21 KJV reads: “How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgement; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.” The RVR reads: “¿Cómo te has convertido en ramera, oh ciudad fiel? Llena estuvo de justicia, en ella habitó la equidad; pero ahora, los homicidas.” (How have you become a harlot, oh faithful city? It had been full of justice, equity inhabited it, but now murderers.) I have chosen this verse in order to show first of all that *tsedeq* here is used in parallelism with *mishpat* (justice, right), and RVR has taken this into account and has introduced a different nuance for *tsedeq*. Secondly, I also want to suggest that the KJV is somewhat off the track when it translates *mishpat* with judgement. The context of the verse clearly indicates that what is being communicated is that at one point Jerusalem was full of “justice” not “judgement” (cf. RSV; NIV; NLT; NEB). Therefore, since the first term (*mishpat*) used is best translated as justice, *tsedeq* takes on a slightly different connotation. RVR uses the word “equity” in the sense of “impartiality, equitable and fair.” In other words it is almost synonymous with justice in the sense that all are treated fairly according to the covenant stipulations. As Brueggemann has commented on this,

The city is remembered as having been faithful in some time past, filled with

justice and righteousness, and fully permeated with covenantal practices that enhance the entire community. But now the city is likened to a whore — fickle, self-indulgent, unprincipled...Everyone seeks self-advancement, and no one cares anymore for the public good. When there is such self-serving and self-seeking, moreover, the needy of society predictably disappear from the screen of public awareness. Widows and orphans are the litmus test of justice and righteousness (cf. 1:17). On this test, Jerusalem fails completely and decisively. **The large theological issues of life with Yahweh boil down to the concreteness of policy toward widows and orphans.**<sup>38)</sup>

The context of the passage is better understood with words that speak more to a communal concern for justice rather than with words that suggest an individual moral state of being.

The same scenario is evident when one compares the different translations of Isaiah 1:26. The implications present, and the responses elicited in readers or hearers, are not the same when one considers the naming of Jerusalem as “city of righteousness” (KJV) or “City of justice” (RVR: *Ciudad de justicia*).

The final passage that I will present is Isaiah 61. This text is well known for the very reason that Jesus quotes the first two verses as he announces his ministry and validates it with the words of the prophet. In this chapter, the word *tsedeq* occurs in vs. 3, and *tsedaqah* in vss. 10 and 11. I will take the liberty in this last passage to include two uses of *tsedaqah* to support my argument.<sup>39)</sup>

Following the first two verses where there is a definite concern for the less privileged of society, i.e. the afflicted, the brokenhearted, the captives, the prisoners, etc., we read that the result of the words and actions of the Servant/Messiah will be that the people will be called “trees of righteousness” (KJV), or “trees of justice” (RVR). Given the theme of the first two verses I would argue strongly that the context shows that *tsedeq* here refers to justice being done on behalf of those who do not have the power to alter their situation.

If this meaning is accepted for vs. 3, then it follows that the speaker in v.10,

38) Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 21-22.

39) M. Weinfeld has drawn the parallel between the Hebrew word pair *mishpat/tsedaqah* and the Akkadian word pair *kittum u misharum*, where the Akkadian pair as well as the Hebrew pair refer to a “sense of justice.” M. Weinfeld, “‘Justice and Righteousness’ - *mishpat and tsedaqah* - The Expression and its Meaning”, H. G. Reventlow and Yair Hoffman, eds., *Justice and Righteousness*, JSOTS 137 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 230.

which I take to be Zion herself,<sup>40</sup>) having experienced justice offered by the Messiah is now able to incarnate that justice: “clothed with a robe of justice”, “wrapped in a mantle of justice”(*tsedaqah*). And then it follows that v.11 speaks of God making “justice” (*tsedaqah*) and “praise” spring forth through Zion before and on behalf of all the nations. As Michael H. Crosby has stated in his comments on the fourth beatitude: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice; they shall be satisfied:”

Constituted in God’s justice, God uses us to “make justice and praise spring up before all nations” (Isa. 61:11)··· Justice is God’s authority, which must be manifested in the world··· When God intervened in the life of the community that suffered injustice of its clerical class (23:1-4), the community experienced Yahweh as “our justice” (Jer. 23:6; 33:16; cf. Isa. 11:1-11). In the power of that experienced justice, Israel was called to a similar ministry of justice. Since Israel’s religious experience and ministry is the archetype of our spirituality, **when the world sees our ministry of justice it should also be able to say of us “our justice.”**<sup>41)</sup>

If the world is ever going to experience our ministry of justice, the primary meaning of *tsedeq* needs to come to light in English translations of the Bible. The “religious” and “moral state of being” elicited by the term “righteousness” has not and will not mobilize the Church to “do justice.”

## 6. Preliminary Suggestions

I will begin this final section by underscoring that *all translation is interpretation*. For translation to take place, a given text needs to be understood. Understanding implies interpretation. This means that translation choices indeed have a direct bearing on theology and “theologizing.”

On this basis I suggest that the evidence presented has pertinent implications for

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40) There is considerable debate over “who” the speaker is in v. 10. The arguments in favor of considering Zion the speaker rather than the Servant/Messiah are much more convincing. Cf. John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 574-575.

41) Michael H. Crosby, *Spirituality of the Beatitudes* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), 118-119.

the way theologizing is done (or not done) in the Church and how it is put into practice through discipleship in the Church. The Protestant church in general, particularly in the Western world, is predicated on an individualistic worldview. The ideology of discipleship is one marked by a heavy emphasis on personal and individual holiness, purity, moral uprightness and rectitude. This extreme individualism tends to promote individual theologies that result in withdrawing from the “real world” and retreating into a “comfort zone” where spirituality is measured primarily by my “righteous state of being.”

Many years ago Émile Durkheim, the noted sociologist, warned against this phenomenon. He pointed out that religion occupies a smaller and smaller portion of social life. Originally, religion had a significant role in all areas of life. However, slowly but surely, the political, economic and scientific worlds separated themselves from their religious functions. Durkheim then states that

God, if in fact we can express ourselves this way, who at the beginning was present in all human relations, now progressively withdraws, abandoning the world to men and their conflicts.<sup>42)</sup>

The result of this is that religion is then reduced to the private life of individuals. In biblical terms, the transforming power of the gospel is taken away from the public sphere and is reduced and limited to a privatized expression.

As a result of this, my first major suggestion is that the Church, if it is serious about making the Ancient Book relevant, needs to “**de-privatize**” the faith. A way to begin this is to nuance the traditional English translations of *tsedeq* and incorporate the communal challenge present in the biblical understanding of “justice” that is fundamental to the meaning of *tsedeq* and its cognates. If this is done, two major things can begin to happen. The first is that change can take place from a passive state of being, where what matters is my personal righteousness, to an active communal concern whereby covenant-life affects all of life. Rather than an emphasis on a self-centered, selfish, ethnocentric, and spirituality that is static, a dynamic, imaginative, and unselfish concern for the “other” can emerge. This then could have an impact on all aspects of life and begin to break down the escapist ideological paradigm in which the so-called secular and spiritual spheres of life are

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42) Émile Durkheim, *De la división del trabajo social* (Buenos Aires: Schapire, 1967), 145-146 (my translation).



totally separated. Rather than withdrawing from the “modern needs” of the world, a different translation can challenge the Church to an active engaging of the world with a relevant message of hope.

Secondly, a more communal horizontal model for ministry and leadership can emerge. The privatistic individual paradigm for ministry tends to foster a theology of leadership that is very hierarchical. This in turn nurtures desires for power, self-aggrandizement and success that play into the mercantilistic and narcissistic values of society in general. I submit that what society needs is not for the Church to imitate the hunger and thirst for power that is so prevalent in human nature but to offer a redemptive alternative based on “the hunger and thirst for justice” that is communally faithful.

My second and last major suggestion is that the “needs of the world” will be addressed much more faithfully by a Church that understands the communal aspects of justice as expressed in the *tsedeq* word family. I wish to emphasize “understand”, for I am fully aware that just a mere change in translation will not be enough. I suggest however, that if the word “justice” appears more often in English Bibles, the richest church in the world may get the message and begin to take seriously the biblical mandate to pursue justice and justice only.

The needs of the world in which we live are indeed overwhelming. Realities such as hunger, oppression, the increasing number of poor people, injustice, broken families, broken relationships, natural disasters, violence, and many more, drown us in anguish and despair. Often times the “righteous” response to these realities has been one of relative indifference based on the premise that one cannot solve all of the problems of the world. Consequently, privatized spirituality concentrates on individual righteousness and well-being without a true “conscientization” of the call to be the salt and light of this world. However, if in fact the Church took seriously the communal practice expressed by *tsedeq*, whereby all members of the human community have a right to a life of decency and respect, then real hope would be proclaimed to the world.

Two examples of “world needs” will suffice to illustrate what might happen if the Church embraced the command to “do justice.” And I might add, in passing, that this constitutes a command, not an option. This is not an elective among many. “Doing and practicing justice” is Gospel (cf. Luk 4:18-19).

Globalization is a term that has acquired many meanings. In terms of economics,

those who have economic power have taken advantage of the “global village” concept and have imposed a “free market” economy that in Latin America is known as “neoliberalism.” This system, or worldview, assumes that free markets that are free of any government intervention provide the solution to the economic and social needs of the world. This has led to what has been called in many Third World countries “savage capitalism”, where there are no controls over fierce and deadly competition. This extreme form of “free market economy” has been studied carefully by Ulrich Duchrow, and he concludes that the consequence of this economic libertarianism is

that the accumulation of money assets is now the absolute, immutable yardstick for all economic, social, ecological, and political decisions. It is no longer just an aim but a concrete mechanism.<sup>43)</sup>

The results of this “concrete mechanism” imposed on the world by those with economic power are that the disadvantaged, the poor, the handicapped, the elderly and the children of the world are living in subhuman conditions and are increasingly more vulnerable. As the accumulation of wealth becomes the primary concern, all other concerns rapidly fade away. This context of “global pillage” cries out for *tsedeq*. This reality represents a tremendous challenge to the Church to proclaim hope by taking seriously the communal and relational demands of *tsedeq*. The total absence of justice has created an enormous void in God’s creation that only God’s people can fill if they truly understand and practice the meaning of *tsedeq*.

Political and military oppression should also be the concern of the Church. Many in the U.S.A. are not aware of the existence of a place in Fort Benning, Georgia, called “The US Army School of the Americas.” This school trains Latin American soldiers in combat, counterinsurgency, and counternarcotics. It is quite significant that 90% of the literature in the Amos library of the School of the Americas is in Spanish.<sup>44)</sup> It is also a well-known fact that graduates of this infamous institution have been responsible for some of the worst human-rights abuses in Latin America.

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43) Ulrich Duchrow, *Alternatives to Global Capitalism: Drawn from Biblical History, Designed for Political Action* (Utrecht: International Books, 1995), 71. See also, Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello, *Global Village or Global Pillage*, 2nd ed. (Massachusetts: South End Press, 1998) and Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999).

44) See the information in: <http://www.benning.army.mil/usarsa/main.htm>. Accessed February 3, 2000.

I have been a personal witness to the atrocities committed by the military regime in Argentina from 1976 to 1983.<sup>45)</sup> Argentine dictators Leopoldo Galtieri and Roberto Viola were both trained at the School of the Americas and they are among those responsible for the killing and disappearance of over 30,000 civilians. The same is true of other graduates of SOA who are responsible for terrible acts of violence in Central America.<sup>46)</sup> There have been many who have tried to have this school closed down. If the Church put on the mantle of “justice” it would raise its voice on behalf of those who are oppressed and who suffer injustice. If indeed we who call ourselves followers of Jesus of Nazareth are truly going to help restore the voiceless, the faceless, the marginalized, the downtrodden, the disadvantaged, and the human being, we will need to be agents of justice as well as righteous beings. And a good place to start is by presenting to the Church a more balanced translation of the Hebrew and Greek texts of God’s revelation when said revelation issues a call to “do justice.”<sup>47)</sup>

A Hasidic tale will serve to conclude this study:

A rabbi asked his students when, at dawn, can one tell the light from darkness? One student replied: when I can tell a goat from a donkey. No, answered the rabbi. Another said: when I can tell a palm tree from a fig. No,

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45) For a detailed report on these atrocities see *Nunca Más, Informe de la Comisión Nacional Sobre La Desaparición de Personas* (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1984).

46) For a detailed report see: <http://www.soaw.org>. Accessed February 2, 2000. For the debate over the arguments as to whether to continue or discontinue the institution see: <http://www.mastiffassociation.org/news/mexic/apa11.htm>. Accessed February 3, 2000. In all fairness, it is necessary to point out that Army Secretary Louis Caldera is attempting to make significant changes in the school. Caldera’s position is that the school continues to be strategically very important for the United States, and that it can be instrumental in the control of drug traffic. See the debate between Louis Caldera and U.S. Rep. Joseph Moakley in: [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/mil.../july-dec99/sotamericas\\_9-21a.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/mil.../july-dec99/sotamericas_9-21a.html).

47) We encounter the same problem in the New Testament regarding the translation of *dikaïos*, *dikaïosyne*. See the excellent analysis offered by C. H. Dodd, “Some Problems of New Testament Translation”, *The Bible Translator* 13 (July 1962), 157; David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 70-73, 400-408ff; Michael H. Crosby, *Spirituality of the Beatitudes* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1982), 118-139; Elsa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, Sharon Ringe trans., (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993). Though the problem has been recognized and addressed carefully, modern English translations of the New Testament have been reluctant to go against “tradition” and have for the most part chosen “righteousness/justification” to render the Greek words in question.

answered the rabbi again. Well then, what is the answer? his students pressed him. Not until you look into the face of every man and every woman and see your brother and your sister, said the rabbi. Only then have you seen the light. All else is still darkness.<sup>48)</sup>

<Keyword>

Justice, Righteousness, Translation, King James Version, Reina Valera 1960 Version, Ideology, History of Bible Translation

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48) Recorded in Johann C. Arnold, *Seeking Peace* (Farmington: The Plough Publishing House, 1998), 103.

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<Abstract>

## 정의와 공의: KJV와 RVR의 “췌데크” 번역에 대한 상황화적 관점에서의 분석

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본 연구는 한 특별한 단어에 대한 번역 문제를 다루며, 각 번역들이 어떻게 교회의 신학화를 결정하는가에 관해 검토한다. 그 출발점은 KJV와 RVR 사이의 비교이다. 여기에서 다루어지는 문제는 다음과 같은 복합적 면모를 가지고 있다. 즉 스페인어와 영어라고 하는 두 개의 현대어, 다양한 문맥에서 나타나는 히브리어 췌데크(*tsedeq*)에 대한 이해, 기독교회에 의해서 수용된 신학을 위한 번역적 선택의 결과 등이다.

기초적 통계 분석은 정의(*justice*)라는 단어가 KJV 전체에 단지 28번 나타나는데 반하여, 동일한 단어 정의(*justicia*)가 RVR에서는 327번 나타나고 있음을 보여준다. KJV가 이 단어를 주로 공의(*righteousness*)로 번역하는 한편, RVR은 이 단어를 대부분 정의(*justicia*)라고 번역하고 있다는 차이점이 필자로 하여금 이 히브리 단어 *tsedeq*를 상황화라고 하는 관점에서 분석하게 하였다. 이 논문에서 필자는 KJV 번역팀이 공의(*righteousness*)를 선택하도록 영향을 준 정치적, 종교적, 사회적 동인(動因)들에 관해 살펴본다. 그리고 또한 17세기 초엽의 상황 속에서 공의(*righteousness*)라고 하는 단어가 어떻게 이해되었는지 검토한다. 끝으로 문맥적 요소들에 대한 이해를 바탕으로, 췌데크의 번역에 그 고유한 뉘앙스를 찾아 주어야 한다는 것을 제안한다. 이것이 또한 교회의 신학화에 영향을 끼치게 될 수 있을 것이다.

(박철우 역)