

A document of the Bible Society of South Africa, being sent out by them since the beginning of 2009, directed at persons and institutions, regarding the new (2016) Afrikaans Bible translation

A new Afrikaans Bible translation project is being undertaken which should be completed around 2016.

Currently the Bible Society is sending out a document regarding this writ to people who inquire about this translation.

In this document the views of the Bible Society and the translators of the new (2016) Afrikaans Bible translation, with reference to the position of Christ in the Old Testament, were stated.

This document appears on pages 2-10. Following on is a response to this document compiled by prof PW Hoek and rev Danie Haasbroek (pages 11-20).

**The use of capital letters in Old Testament passages which is indicated
in the New Testament as referring to the Messiah.**

1. Introduction and orientation

From the earliest times the church took the view that particular passages in the Old Testament had to be understood as referring to Jesus Christ and the work He was to undertake. In fact, this happened in the very first assemblies and can be traced very clearly throughout the New Testament.

Time and again the translators of the Authorized Version of the Dutch Bible indicated with notes in the margins of the Old Testament which verses referred to the Messiah in the New Testament. However the translators did not use capital letters in the printed version of the Dutch Authorized Bible. Even in slightly later editions of the Dutch translation, printed without notes or footnotes, no capital letters were used in Old Testament verses which refer to the Messiah according to the New Testament. At the start of the twentieth century (we are unsure about the exact date of the edition) when footnotes and margin notes were omitted entirely,¹ the practice was established of rendering passages in the Old Testament, which were indicated as Messianic by the New Testament, in capital letters in typesetting the translation. This occurred in the case of designations (compare Isaiah 9:6) as well as in the case of direct pronouns (that is 'he' and 'him') which referred to Jesus Christ according to the New Testament.

¹ The demand for editions of the Dutch Authorized Bible without the extra size and weight, most probably necessitated these omissions.

In this instance for example the word ‘servant’ in Isaiah 53 was printed in lower case in die 1892 edition, but in editions after 1900 a capital letter was employed including the pronouns referring to the ‘servant’. The three Dutch translations now widely used in the Dutch-speaking world, namely Bijbel Vertaling 1951, De Bijbel (Willibrord revised edition 1995) and De Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling 2004, do not make use of any capital letters in Isaiah 53. The 1933 Afrikaans translation, as well as the revised edition of 1953, followed the practice of the Dutch Authorized Bible post 1900. However, the new Afrikaans translation of 1983 returned to the use of lower case, as had been the case for many centuries, and only printed capital letters for designations or titles, used as proper names.

2. What about the source text and other translations?

It is well known that Hebrew did not employ any ‘capital letters’. Only in exceptional cases (for example Deut 6:4) a number of larger letters were used in printed editions of the Hebrew text.

The most ancient complete translations of the books of the Old Testament were done in Greek. These translations formed the Septuagint and were the Holy Scriptures of the New Testament writers. This is evident from Old Testament quotations in the New Testament. At some stage of the language development Greek had the ability to use ‘capital letters’. In this way the Greek texts of the Septuagint from the fourth to the ninth centuries were written entirely in capitals (in the so-called *majusculus* manuscripts). Since the Middle Ages the use of lower case came back in use (in the so-called *minusculus* manuscripts). It is noticeable that nowhere in the Greek

translations of the Old Testament the method of writing is altered in passages which, according to the New Testament, refer to or promise of the advent of the Messiah. In the same way the edition which is still being regarded as the most reliable version of the Old Testament in Greek, for many years in use by the early church, namely the version by Alfred Rahlfs, employs capital letters for proper names, but not for pronouns in passages such as Isaiah 53. This applies to all passages in the Old Testament which are indicated as Messianic in the New Testament.² This too applies to the Latin translations in use in the church over the centuries.

Even in the Martin Luther translation and revised editions thereof, no capital letters are used for pronouns referring to the 'servant' in Isaiah 53. The same is even more valid for English translations. Of the many English translations now generally available the following do not use capital letters: Contemporary English Version, English Standard Version 2001, Good News Bible, King James, The Message, The Net Bible, The New American Bible, New Century Version, New International Version, New Jerusalem Bible, New Living Translation, New Revised Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, 1890 Darby Bible and American Standard Version. As far as can be ascertained only the New American Standard Bible, New King James Version, Young's Literal Translation and the Holman Christian Standard Bible use capital letters in Isaiah 53.

Thus it is evident that the use of capital letters to indicate to readers that particular passages had been understood by New Testament writers as being references to Jesus Christ were restricted (apart from the number of English

² Compare e.g. Isaiah 7:15

translations) mainly to editions of the Dutch Authorized Bibles, printed after 1900, and the Afrikaans translation of 1933 (revised in 1953), which followed on the practice of the post 1900 Dutch Authorized Bibles.

3. The Afrikaans Bible translation project at present being undertaken (ABT)

In compiling the Workbook which contains prior planning of practical issues regarding the translation statement for the ABT, the question about Old Testament passages, understood in the New Testament as promises of or references to Christ, was discussed in full. The compilers of the Workbook were well aware that the New Testament authors undoubtedly noted that certain passages of the Old Testament had, apart from the obvious meaning, also a hidden or deeper meaning³ which they understood as referring to the Person and work of Christ. Therefore, the question in compiling the Workbook was the following: Should the hidden or deeper meaning of a text (or even only some words) in the Old Testament be settled, so that the obvious meaning is relegated to the background; or should the obvious meaning be translated, resulting in the New Testament understanding of the text not being indicated? It was evident that it was impossible to express or to indicate in print both the obvious and the deeper meaning **simultaneously**. Moreover, a translation which tries to render only the New Testament meaning would not be a true rendition of the Old Testament source text. And the translators and the Bible Society refuse to deviate from producing a true rendition of the source text.

³ The words 'deeper meaning' **indicate broadly** that which is understood in New Testament exegesis of the Old Testament as prophecy, that is fulfillment of promises (cf Mat 1:22-23) or also exegeted as typology and allegory (cf for the latter Rom 5:14 and 1 Cor 10:1-4).

The problem can briefly be illustrated by an example. In Hosea 11:1 we find the well-known words (in the New King James Version): “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.” This is undoubtedly a reference to the twelve tribes of Israel who were led out of Egypt by Moses. This is the obvious meaning and in the quoted version ‘son’ was not written with a capital letter. According to Matthew 2:15 a deeper meaning applies to the second half of Hosea 11:1. The author of the Gospel says this was a prophecy referring to the child Jesus returning from Egypt with Joseph and Mary after the death of Herod. Because of this the translators of the Afrikaans 1933/53 version printed ‘Son’ in Matthew 2:15 with a capital letter. However, it is impossible to indicate to the reader by using a capital letter that Hosea 11:1 refers to Christ, without losing the obvious meaning. In fact it is impossible to express **simultaneously** the primary meaning and the deeper meaning in an Old Testament translation in language and typesetting (capital letters and lower case). Several other instances can serve as examples, among others Ephesians 5:31 where the author quotes Genesis 2:24, stating that a mystery, that is a hidden meaning, is encased in those words.⁴ The author very clearly says that the obvious meaning is still in force (cf v 33). Even though this is not a reference to Christ, the apostle Paul’s use of the Genesis event related in Galatians 4:20 to 30 can also serve as an example of a symbolic (in this case allegorical) meaning attached to the Old Testament event in the New Testament. Something which cannot be expressed or indicated in the **text (language and typesetting)** of an Old Testament translation.

⁴ In Greek the word *mysterion* is used, translated in Latin as *sacramentum*. In the Roman Catholic and the Protestant ecclesiastical tradition it is understood as referring to marriage. However, the context clearly shows it rather refers to the **words** in Gen 2:24.

Because the compilers of the Workbook honour the New Testament understanding of particular passages of the Old Testament, it was decided to insert a footnote in the Afrikaans translation at present being undertaken, in all those cases where the New Testament authors indicate a deeper meaning in a text or words from the Old Testament. In this way the reader can see the New Testament understanding of that particular text or words, thus without losing the primary meaning. In so doing it can be regarded as a move back towards the use initially established by translators of the Dutch Authorized Bible. This approach applies only in those cases where the New Testament **authors** indicate this deeper meaning and certainly not in cases where other interpreters or dogmatists found symbolic or deeper meanings in the Old Testament.

4. The difference between dogmatic sense and translation

Everyone who has attempted translating old texts from a different cultural environment knows that interpreting those texts in preparing translation is inevitable. Every translator also knows the dangers attached thereto, especially in the case of religious texts, where the dogmatic beliefs of the translator can very easily have the text say something completely different to that which is written in the source document.

In this way it was very popular at some stage to refer to Genesis 3:15, from a dogmatic scheme seeing the Old Testament primarily as promises which would be fulfilled in New Testament times, as the 'proto-promise'. The word 'bruise' (in 'He shall bruise your head', compare New King James Version) is interpreted as the future victory of Jesus Christ over the serpent,

namely satan. Such an interpretation does not account for the fact that the Hebrew verb used for 'bruise' is the same verb as the one describing the action of the serpent (in other words, the word 'bruise' in 'you shall bruise His heel'). The Hebrew verb used in both cases (namely *shuf*) means 'to strike' (Strong #7779). Therefore the translators of the Septuagint used the same verb in both cases. Notwithstanding the fact that the translators of the Afrikaans 1933 edition used two different verbs (namely 'vermorsel' i.e. 'crush' and 'byt' i.e. 'bite') they also did not understand Genesis 3:15 to refer to Jesus Christ (compare the use of the lower case '**h**om' i.e. 'him' in 'you will bite his heel' - freely translated).

From this example it is evident that dogmatic sense has its place in the lecture halls and the pulpit, but should be avoided when translating the Bible,⁵ something clearly indicated by various translation theories. Therefore the Workbook of the ABT contains the following condition:

Theological commentaries should be handled with great care as the danger exists that theological beliefs settled in the commentaries, could become dominant in understanding the text, while the particular textual unit in its unique world and with its unique textual presentation should be the determining factor. The text is more important than the dogmatic sense thereto. Faithfulness to the source text is of the utmost importance and the exegete should be fully aware of own hermeneutical presuppositions.

⁵ For example, an honest translator can be fully convinced that the Holy Spirit guided the authors of the New Testament in their understanding of the Old Testament, but will not 'write it into' the translated text of the Old or New Testaments, unless it is written clearly in the source document.

5. In summary

In the light of the above it is clear that

- the true source text **translation** of the text and **dogmatic sense** of a text differ,
- the obvious meaning of a text in the Old Testament and the possibility of such a text for symbolic interpretation of the deeper meaning as seen by the authors of the New Testament, cannot be expressed simultaneously in a translation,
- the use of designating with capital letters certain passages in the Old Testament which are indicated in the New Testament as referring to the Messiah, as used in the translation tradition of the Afrikaans versions, is limited to only a few English translations, the Dutch Authorized Bibles printed after 1900 and the Afrikaans translation of 1933 as well as the revised Afrikaans version of 1953.

6. In conclusion

The decision not to use capital letters in the Afrikaans translation at present being undertaken, in order to designate particular passages in the Old Testament which are indicated in the New Testament as being Messianic, but to insert footnotes into the translation of the Old Testament, was taken with responsibility, considering the history of translation from the source text, translation theories and the assignment to the translator to translate the source text faithfully, not to affect or delimit the primary meaning.

Any allegation that collaborators on the present Afrikaans Bible Translation Project deliberately attempt 'to remove Christ from the Old Testament' is not true and is uninformed. It does not agree with facts on the table.

RESPONSE TO THE ABOVE DOCUMENT

It is imperative to respond to the above document. That is why we take a stand in this regard.

The following headings refer to statements made (or truths suppressed) in the above document.

1. The words: “primary meaning”

The writer(s) of the above document used the term “primary meaning” which was supposed to be found in the Hebrew text, a couple of times. It is also defined as “the obvious meaning of a text in the Old Testament” . (Compare for example sections 3 and 5 in the above writ.)

The question is now: Why can we not accept the primary meaning of the Old Testament text, as declared by Christ Himself, as such? He said: “You search the Scriptures (that is the Old Testament)... and these are they which testify of Me” (Jn 5:39).

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

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

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

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

It is clear that the point of departure the writers of the above document wish to convey, is totally unacceptable. They never refer to the Holy Spirit and His work in delivering the Scriptures. The “obvious meaning” is exactly what the Holy Spirit revealed – and more pointedly: that which He revealed about Christ.

If the Bible had been a compilation of human stories, the argument by the above writers could hold water. However, to downgrade Scripture to writings where Christ had not been revealed from the beginning to the end, is sin. Fact is that the Holy Spirit has inspired the entire Scripture (2 Pet 1:20, 21).

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

The Old Testament people had to acknowledge and honour Him as Messiah from the Old Testament. Only those who acknowledged Him as such and believed in Him were saved. There was no other way in which they could be saved (Jn 14:6).

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

Over against some verses which could possibly indicate such a distinction (as mentioned in the above document, namely Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15) several hundred verses in the New Testament indicate that the Old Testament testified directly to Christ.

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

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

The result of such a distinction is evident. Christ is deprived of His place of honour in the Old Testament and lower case is employed. Other than that, the Holy Spirit is also divested of His honour – and the word “Spirit” appears now in lower case in Genesis 1:2, in the first edition of the “Proefvertaling”, or trial version, of chapters of the new Afrikaans Bible translation. (Genesis 1:2 reads here as follows: “En die gees van God was aan die sweef oor die water”.)

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

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

Over against that the truth is uncompromising: the Old Testament, as the New Testament, positively proclaims the only true Christ (Messiah) throughout.

2. The work of the Holy Spirit is suppressed

Nowhere in the above document is mention made of the Holy Spirit. The writers of the above document have views which are out of order precisely because the Holy Spirit is not acknowledged for His guidance in understanding Scripture.

Only the Holy Spirit can indicate to us the real meaning of Old Testament passages. He is the “Spirit of Christ” in the prophets and therefore in all the authors of the Bible (1 Pet 1:11). This capacity the Holy Spirit revealed even to the Old Testament readers – and those who believed this, were saved.

2 Peter 1:20, 21 further sheds light on this. We learn that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation”. In other words: To want to read the Scriptures in any way without the clear knowledge that the Holy Spirit will guide one in understanding, is out of order. The reason is, the Holy Spirit inspired the authors of the Bible, therefore they spoke “from God” (2 Pet 1:21 – according to the original text).

From 1 Corinthians 12:3 we know that nobody can really and truly say that Jesus is Lord, apart from the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This therefore proclaims that nobody can understand the “obvious meaning” of the Bible (and thus also the “deeper meaning” of the Bible) unless the Holy Spirit guides and teaches him. In other words: When the Holy Spirit guides a reader of the Bible, he will be able to recognise Christ in the Scriptures. Then it becomes clear to him that Christ is the “obvious” and the “deeper meaning”, and in fact the message of Scripture – wherever he might read in the Bible.

In the Hebrew text the word “ruag” appears in Genesis 1:2. This word can be translated with the words “wind”, “breath” and “spirit”. The meaning must always be inferred from the context. In Genesis 1:2 this word has to be translated as “Spirit” (with a capital “S”) as this word refers to a Divine Person.

There is only one true God and He is the Triune God. He made and formed creation. Therefore the word “Spirit” must be written with a capital letter in Genesis 1:2.

A lower case “spirit” in Genesis 1:2 cannot be the Spirit of the Triune God in whom we believe – thus denying who God truly is.

In some English translations of the Bible the words “Spirit” and “Holy Spirit” are written in lower case in the Old Testament as “spirit” and “holy spirit” (compare Ps 51:11-13; Is 63:10-11). In The New English Bible this is the case throughout, even largely in later editions of the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version. However, the question remains: Are there any grounds for imitating such translations?

3. The source text

The first edition of the “Proefvertaling”, or trial version, of the Afrikaans Bible translation project was published in 2008. As a terrible shock it was noticed that the Name of the Holy Spirit appeared in lower case – and this implies that the Names of Christ in Messianic prophecies also appear in lower case.

What is the reasoning of the translators for translating the Bible in this way?

It appears that they regard the book Genesis (and thus the Old Testament) as a compilation of folk-tales handed down by (primitive?) people. Read for example the introduction to the book, Genesis as published in this trial version – which will most probably appear in the new translation! The following are two sentences from this introduction:

“Die boek (*Genesis*) begin ... met ’n gedeelte (1-11) bestaande uit verskillende vertellings wat die oorsprong van die mensdom probeer beskryf uit die oogpunt van die godsdienstige oortuigings van die mense van die Bybelse tyd.” (The book (*Genesis*) commences with a section (1-11) comprising various stories which try to describe the origin of humankind from the view point of religious beliefs of people in Bible times) and: “Genesis is saamgestel uit verhale wat uit verskillende tye en omgewings kom.” (Genesis is a compilation of stories from various times and places.)

The translators thus view the Scriptures as having emanated from man. Therefore it is not God's direct revelation through the Holy Spirit. And this opposes for example Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 32:15, 16; 34:1, 2, 27, 28; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

In the letter (or document) from the Bible Society (on page 5 above) is declared: "And the translators and the Bible Society refuse to deviate from producing a true rendition of the source text".

Are they of the opinion that they are true to the source text by using lower case? We regard this as misleading. Do they not misuse the words "source text"?

One may justly wonder why so much emphasis is placed on the source text if the source text is nothing other than human stories where Christ and the Holy Spirit are not clearly evident.

4. Capital letters are inserted during typesetting

The use of capital letters is not considered merely during typesetting (or printing). From the start of the translation process it should be regarded as imperative to produce a correct version of the nature of Scripture.

For example, it is important to write the pronouns "He" and "Him" with capitals to indicate to the reader that God is spoken of in reverence.

It is unacceptable that probably in most modern English Bible translations lower case "he", "him" and "his" are used when referring to God.

In the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament capital letters should be used to guide the Bible reader in proper understanding of the Messianic prophecies.

5. The Dutch Authorized Bible

It is alleged that the Dutch Authorized Bible does not make use of capital letters in the Messianic prophecies, but that New Testament references are indicated in footnotes at the bottom of the page. This allegation deserves comments.

Maybe the situation of the relevant rulers who commissioned the translation of the Bible in Dutch, as well as the theologians employed to do the work, can shed some

light on this. Initially they could have assumed that half a page would be devoted to clarifying comments and that this would provide sufficient clarification on how Christ is evident in the relevant passages.

It is instructive to view a later edition of the Dutch Authorized Bible. In an edition printed in 1919 the following Names of Christ appear in capital letters:

Psalm 2:2, 6, 7, 12: *Gesalfde, Koning, Seun* (Anointed, King, Son)

Psalm 16:10: *Heilige* (compare Acts 2:31; 13:35) (Holy)

Psalm 45:1, 6, 7, 11: *Koning, God, Heere* (King, God, Lord)

Psalm 110:1, 4: *Heere, Priester* (Lord, Priest)

Isaiah 4:2: *SPRUIT* (BRANCH)

Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15: *SPRUIT* (BRANCH)

Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16: *DE HEERE, ONZE GERECHTIGHEID* (THE LORD
OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS)

Joel 2:23: *Leeraar ter gerechtigheid* (Teacher of righteousness)

Micah 5:2: *Heerser* (Ruler)

Zechariah 9:9: *Koning, Heiland* (King, Saviour)

Malachi 3:1: *Engel des verbonds*. (Angel of the covenant)

From the above it is evident that in this edition of the Dutch Authorized Bible more Names of Christ are printed in capital letters than even in the Afrikaans 1933/53 translation. Compare in this list the words: Holy (Ps 16:10), Priest (Ps 110:4), Teacher (Joel 2:23) and Saviour (Zech 9:9).

Apparently theologians involved with the translation of the Dutch Authorized Bible gradually came to the conclusion over a period of centuries that it was essential to use capital letters for the Names of Christ in the Old Testament. Moreover, they used more capital letters than were employed in the Afrikaans 1933/53 translation.

Furthermore it is important to heed that, as the margin notes disappeared from the Dutch Authorized Bible over time, quite a number of verses remained, pointing the reader to the New Testament verses. These New Testament references appear straight after verses in the Old Testament and not at the bottom of the pages (that is, in footnotes) in the Old Testament.

In this we find indeed an example to follow, namely to use capital letters as well as verse references (even if these are in footnotes) in the Old Testament!

Nevertheless in this 1919 edition the four “Servant of the LORD” prophecies in Isaiah (42:1-7; 49:1-13; 50:4-10; 52:13 – 53:12) only lower case was employed throughout – and this is not an example to follow.

In the 1919 edition of the Dutch Authorized Bible many New Testament references were placed at the end of verses. This function was replaced in the 1933/53 Afrikaans translation by a column with references in the centre of each page. This method is more complete and may even be better than footnotes.

The use of footnotes will therefore offer nothing more than would columns with references as employed in the 1933/53 Afrikaans translation.

6. The allegation that the use of capital letters is limited to a few English translations, the Dutch Authorized Bible post 1900 and the Afrikaans 1933/53 translation

That this allegation creates a correct impression is questionable.

First of all can be mentioned that the old King James Version (or Authorised Version) published in England in 1611, used the words “Thee”, “Thou” and “Thy” for God throughout. This English Bible translation was the only one available for three centuries and was used all over the world.

The following are examples of recent translations. In the Portuguese Bible the next words appear in capital letters in the Old Testament’s Messianic prophecies:

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

Psalm 45:6: *o Deus* (o God)

Psalm 110:1: *meu Senhor* (my Lord)

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

Psalm 45:7, 8: *ô Dieu* (o God)

Psalm 110:1: *mon Seigneur* (my Lord)

Conclusion: The question should rather be inverted, namely: In which Bible translations in Occidental languages (i.e. languages in the Western world) are capital letters not used?

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The translators of the new Afrikaans Bible have the opportunity to present to Afrikaans generations to come a Bible which expounds the revelation of God clearly and in truth. Please do not conceal the truths of salvation by using for example lower case letters!
- 7.2 Precisely because so many Bible translations structure the wrong trends it is imperative to use the correct point of departure in this case. If the Bible translators do not have the correct point of departure, Bible readers can have the impression that the Bible emanated from man and was not given from Above. It can also create the impression that the Bible does not deal with that which God said, but merely with man's ideas about it.
- 7.3 The Triune God revealed Himself also in the Old Testament. The Bible reader should be clear about the way each of the three Persons is revealed in the Old Testament.
- 7.4 Logically speaking the Pentecostal Churches will not accept (and use) a Bible in which the Holy Spirit is undervalued. Moreover, every denomination should stand on the fact that they will not accept a Bible translation which removes Christ and the Holy Spirit from the translation.
- 7.5 The use of lower case can cause a lot of damage and may produce schisms at churches and between believers, but the use of capital letters cannot cause any damage or schisms. Isn't it the responsibility of the Bible Society and the Bible translators not to be guilty of causing such schisms by translating Christ and the Holy Spirit out of the Old Testament, in the use of lower case letters?

ADDENDUM

The term “my Lord” in Psalm 110:1

As this has become a moot point it is imperative to comment on this.

The term “my Lord” in Psalm 110:1 appears in the Hebrew text as *Adoni*. This word has a royal plural form, namely *Adonai*, which is found in Malachi 3:1 for example. Both these words point to a single Person, namely Christ, in these two verses.

In the English language we find the same royal plural form being used to express the majesty and greatness of a particular person.

In the Hebrew text these words appeared only in consonants within a few centuries A.D. In order to produce a more legible text, vowels (namely a, e, i, o, u) were added as points and dashes, above and under and in the consonants. The Masoretes, a group of Jewish scribes, undertook this task.

The words *Adoni* and *Adonai* have the exact same consonants. Now the question arises, did the Masoretes supply the correct vowels to the word *Adoni* in Psalm 110:1. Should this not have been *Adonai* as well? This is the subject of the debate.

However, both forms indisputably refer to Christ. Christ Himself declared this to be so and was penned by three authors of the Gospels (Mt 22:43-45; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44).

The meaning of the words *Adoni* and *Adonai* is furthermore illustrated by the use of the word *El*, and the royal plural form of that word, namely *Elohim*. Both are translated with the word “God”. Both can indicate a single Person in the Godhead, or a plurality of Persons in the Godhead. In Genesis 1:1 the word *Elohim* appears.

These four words (*Adoni*, *Adonai*, *El* and *Elohim*) can refer to God or even important persons like kings or even idols. At all times the meaning of the relevant word should be derived from the context, thus also the context in the New Testament revelation.

While the word *Jahveh* expresses the Covenantal Name of God, the words *Adoni* and *Adonai* indicate rank. Thus it means Christ is the Sovereign, the Supreme Judge and Ruler, and therefore the highest in rank and above creation.

Conclusion: We stand firm on our view that the term “my Lord” in Psalm 110:1 refers to Christ alone.

Prof PW Hoek
Rev Danie Haasbroek

1 September 2009