

Revelation 1:9 in the Navajo Bible

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Shí John, nihínaaí nishlínii, Jesus bił lá'í daniidlíigo ti'hoo'níh áádóó aláahgo bee bóhólníihgo bił haz'áanii índá nízaadgóó ha'ahóní nihíł ałts'áá' da'nisk'iiz. Diyin God bizaad baa hashne'go índá Jesus bá hashne'go biniinaa táyi'déé' kéyah háá'áago Pátmos hoolyéedi nishi'deeltí. (Revelation 1:9)¹

I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 1:9)²

Discussion

There's a tiny little phrase in this verse that comes across nicely in Navajo. Where the English says, "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," the Navajo has, *Diyin God bizaad baa hashne'go índá Jesus bá hashne'go biniinaa . . .* So on the one hand we have, "word of God . . . testimony of Jesus," and on the other, "*Diyin God bizaad baa hashne'go índá Jesus bá hashne'go biniinaa*"; "word . . . testimony," *baa hashne'go . . . bá hashne'go*.

The predicate *baa hashne'go* means that I speak "about" something or someone, while *bá hashne'go* means I speak "for" someone, or "on behalf of" someone. The difference between the two predicates is in their post positions, i.e., *baa* "about it," as opposed to *bá* "for it," or "on behalf of it." We could drill down further and isolate */aa/* as opposed to */á/*, where the one vowel is long and has low tone and the other is short and has high tone. But even this doesn't take us far enough to show only what distinguishes the two words, because the quality of the vowel is the same in both cases. It's not the vowel itself (*/a/*) that distinguishes the two post positions, but the vowel's length and its tone.

It is a small difference of sound, but it conveys a larger difference of meaning, and conveys it gracefully in terms of the resources offered by the language. Is there any doctrinal significance in saying these things? No, it just sounds nice. It's good word smithing, as we find so often in this translation.

¹ Navajo Bible quotations are from *Diyin God Bizaad. The Holy Bible in Navajo*. Revised edition. New York: American Bible Society, 2000.

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