Questions and Answers

Translation of Matthew 6 : 13 in Ruanda

Question:

The New Testament Revision committee of Ruanda asks for guidance on this verse. The present translation is *Ntutujyane mu bitwosya.* This means 'Lead us not into things which entice us to evil'.

Our difficulty, a well-known one, derives from the meaning of 'temptation'. Is it 'testing' as in James 1 : 2? If this is the meaning, it follows closely our Lord's own prayer in the garden, 'If it be possible, let this cup pass from me'. If it is 'enticing to evil', it seems to contradict the thought in James 1 : 13, 'Let no man say... I am tempted of God'. Yet the prayer as it stands in Ruanda suggests that God is taking the initiative in leading us into evil, and can be only kept from doing so by our prayer.

The reason for these questions is that in Ruanda we have two words, one for each type of testing, *kw-oshya* as used at present which means 'enticing, seducing to evil', and the other *ku-gerageza,* giving much more the idea of testing.

Again the word 'lead' used in the existing text makes it clear that God takes the initiative in our testings or temptations, and the word literally means *goes with us* into them. The French of the 'Segond' version gives *induis,* which according to my dictionary gives the idea of persuasion. On the other hand, the 'Synodale' version says 'ne nous laisse pas succomber à la tentation'. 'Don't abandon us to succumb to temptation'. Perhaps 'abandon us' is putting too strong a meaning into 'nous laisser', but Mr. Hands of the S.D.A. had a commentary which gave this meaning.

Do you feel it can bear this meaning, 'Leave us not to fall into temptation'? We have therefore the following possibilities:

1. The present text, *Ntutujyane mu bitwoshya.* 'Lead us not into things that entice us to evil'.
2. *Ntuduhane mu bitwoshya.* 'Don't abandon us in the things that entice us to evil'.
3. *Ntutujyane mu bitugerageza.* 'Lead us not into things which test us'.
4. *Ntutwemerere kugushwa n'ibitwoshya.* 'Don't allow us to succumb to temptation'.

Answer:

As you say, this is a notorious crux. Your difficulty is accentuated, apparently, by the fact that you have no exact word equivalent of the Greek *peirasmos.* The one thing the translator should be careful of is the danger of leaning too much towards exegesis in solving this problem. I know that it cannot altogether be avoided, but it is a safe rule to choose a minimal or even a neutral meaning as an equivalent of the Greek original rather than risk a term which is too decisive in the matter of exegesis.

As far as I am aware, no one has discovered a simple explanation of the problem of *peirasmos* in the New Testament. It brings us right up against the profoundest mysteries of our faith.

In my view, it would be safer to use your word *ku-gerageza* and leave it to your preachers and exegetes to deal with its implications. The idea of testing can be made in certain contexts to include, if necessary, the idea of being 'enticed into evil', but the latter certainly would not do justice to the significance of the word *peirasmos* in all its contexts. I therefore come down in favour of your third alternative, *Ntutujyane mu bitugerageza.*

W. J. B.

Readers' Corner

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The Bishop of Nyasaland, in his first paragraph speaks of translators who "have all unwittingly deprived their converts of at least part of the meaning of the Scriptures". Then, speaking of his own revision in Chinyanja, he says in his third point regarding 2 Cor. 4 : 4 that he "boldly put Satan" in translating "the god of this world".

This can hardly pass without comment. In thus handling the Word of Life and actually changing one appellation for another, the Bishop has surely been as unwitting as those other translators of whom he spoke!

In the paragraph vv. 1-7 there appear two contrasts: two types of people and two "gods". The Bishop has surely removed one of these contrasts. Does this not rather "obscure" than "clarify"? The wonder of his African priest when shown that "the god of this world" is Satan will surely not be more than that of one who will have to be taught that Satan is, in fact, the god of this world!

T. W. G. Collins

Book Review

The Shrine of a People's Soul, by Edwin W. Smith. New York: Friendship Press. 1947. viii, 216 pp. A re-issue with some changes and additions.

No one in the world can appreciate this book better than The Harmless Drudges, Past, Present, and Future, to whom it is dedicated and for whom *The Bible Translator* is published. They are those dedicated folk who are always listening, analyzing, weighing, questioning, mumbling to themselves around markets, villages or isolated huts, and burning midnight electricity or oil (where there is any), fighting off insects or numbing cold and weariness, while they study their Bibles and commentaries—those people seeking to translate the Word of God into another man's native language, the shrine of his soul.