

Babel

Since 1955 the International Federation of Translators has published, with the aid of UNESCO, a most useful quarterly, entitled *Babel*. Though this journal is dedicated primarily to the needs of professional translators in the literary, scientific, commercial, and diplomatic fields, there are numerous stimulating articles which would be of interest to Bible translators as well.

Some numbers of *Babel* are dedicated primarily to such special themes as machine translating and lexicography, but all of them contain numerous helpful suggestions, rewarding book reviews, and notices of relevant publications in the field of translating.

The March 1957 edition of *Babel*, which is typical of most numbers, contains such articles as (1) a delightful account by Valera Larbaud, entitled *Divertissement philologique*, in which he recounts the beauties of Portuguese, (2) an excellent treatment of translating poetry by Edmond Cary, with a particularly interesting study of the manner in which a Chinese poem has been rendered into English, Italian, French, Spanish, Russian, and German, (3) a thought-provoking statement by Lorenzo Lanza Di Trabia, President of the International Federation of Translators, (4) a number of practical hints on how interpreters may best take notes, (5) a review by R. W. Jumpelt of Benjamin Lee Whorf's book *Language, Thought, and Reality*, and (6) a highly useful list of important technical monolingual and bilingual dictionaries covering such specialized fields as mechanical engineering, electrochemistry, television and radar, telecommunications, photography, and civil engineering.

To the readers of *The Bible Translator* some of the statements by Dr. Di Trabia will be especially interesting. For example, in discussing the need of translations to be in the natural idiom of the people, he says, "It should be impossible to know whether a work is translated, unless one is told." In commenting upon some of the broader sociological and "theological" implications of the translators task, Di Trabia writes,

If we return again to the Bible, we find that the confusion of languages was the punishment inflicted by the Lord for the pride of man in trying to "make himself a name" and to build "a tower whose top may reach unto heaven"—Babel. The multiplicity of tongues is thus connected with the sin of pride. Translation may be taken as representing an instrument of redemption from this sin. But through the same mental processes that dictated the attitude towards work, translation was surrounded by an atmosphere of shame which is only now, little by little, being transformed, since it is dimly beginning to be felt that it is an instrument of redemption from the sin of pride and so should lead to a glorification of the translator's function. But the translator knows that this glorification can never come as it did for work as such since, by its very nature, translation is, and must always remain, humble with the true, essential humility which combats pride. It is even more difficult for the general run of people to exalt this vocation than to glorify work

in itself on account of the different nature of the sin to which they were respectively linked in the popular mind.

The translator is aware that he works for the glory of another creator. This humility and altruism make his work so much the more worthy. He knows that atonement can only be reached through the hard daily practice of his humble activity and he knows the profound reason for the divers languages and dialects and that the Idea is reflected in all these languages as the light is refracted in the million drops of the spray of a fountain so that everything may have at the same time more light—and one light—a living theme of multiplicity in unity.

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