

something to offer us. What then should be our attitude towards the many newer translations that are now available?

Most of us are inclined to open them at a passage on which we have decided views and judge the book by the way in which the translator has rendered that particular passage. This is not a very reasonable test, for the Scriptures are not to conform to our theology but our theology to the Scriptures, and this may well be one of those passages which are "subject to divers senses". Nor should we be too hasty in saying that the translator has deliberately obscured or falsified the passage, for to accuse any reputable scholar of such practice is equivalent to accusing a scientist of faking an experiment or an accountant of drawing up a misleading balance sheet. Again it is not wise to retreat behind the saying "The old is better" and refuse to consider any version later than the Authorised. An examination of the passage from which the quotation comes will show that it expressed the feelings of the Jews who considered the old wine of Judaism to be better than the new wine of Christianity. If you are attached to some edition because of the helpful marginal notes, it is well to remember that the success of the King James Version was due to the fact that it was the first version from which all notes (except those required to clarify the meaning of a word) were rigorously excluded. Even if a version has some undoubted errors in it we should not condemn it wholesale. The Septuagint was by no means perfect, yet it was accepted by the early church, and quotations from it which vary from the Hebrew are now regarded by us as Scripture. The King James Version has acknowledged errors, yet no version has been more used of God than it has been. Surely the advice of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5 : 20, meets the case exactly. As translated by Phillips it reads:

"Never despise what is spoken in the name of the Lord. By all means use your judgment and hold on to whatever is good".

Social Anthropology in Missionary Service

C. P. Groves

(Being a review of Dr. E. A. Nida's latest book, *Customs and Cultures*, published by Harper at \$ 4.00.)

The appreciation of a point of view different from the one we take for granted is less easy than we often think. Having grown up inside a particular social structure and historical tradition, we normally accept its outlook and apply its standards unless by an effort of imagination we place ourselves outside it. The foreign visitor's failure to adopt a standpoint appropriate to a new situation is well illustrated in the case of the Parisian who visited London and on his return was asked for his impressions. Well, he said, one thing struck him as very strange: whereas in Paris public places were named after great victories — place

de Jena, rue de Rivoli — in London they were named after defeats — Trafalgar Square, Waterloo Bridge! It is easier than we think to be convicted of such judgments.

While the missionary has been no more obtuse than others of his countrymen abroad, yet in his case more has been at stake in any such misinterpretation. Charged with the communication of a religious message he believes to be valid for all mankind, he has all too often offered it, not in that simplicity characteristic of the Founder of his Faith, nor after the pattern of the master missionary who found himself through his release from the bondage of a purely national tradition — in Harnack's striking phrase Paul "tore the gospel from its Jewish soil and rooted it in the soil of humanity" — but has taken it, albeit all unwittingly, overloaded and even obscured by the traits of his own national culture. There have of course always been brilliant exceptions to the rule. The American Board boasted such an one in Katie Parker (later Mrs. Newton Lindley) a century ago on Zululand: "I fear", she wrote to her mother in New York, "we as a Mission have tried too much to make Americans of our Zulus and not enough to make Christians of them. Very many things they give up when they become Christians are merely making them more like our own nation, not affecting their Christianity in the least". David Livingstone showed an outstanding capacity to appreciate the African side of the picture, as witness his attitude as a doctor to the much maligned African practitioner: "Those doctors who have inherited their profession as an heirloom from their fathers and grandfathers generally possess some valuable knowledge, the result of long and close observation . . . With the regular practitioners I always remained on the best terms, by refraining from appearing to doubt their skill in the presence of their patients. Any explanation in private was thankfully received by them". Such an attitude of respect for people with a culture different from our own is not easy to secure. The first step is to be made aware that in such a social order and body of belief there is something worthy of our attention and understanding.

It is in this connection that *Customs and Cultures* by Eugene A. Nida (New York: Harper, 1954, \$ 4.00) meets an urgent need, as the purpose stated in the sub-title indicates: "Anthropology for Christian Missions". Deliberately popular in presentation — witness such alliterative chapter headings as "Hoes and Headaches", "Drums and Drama" — it offers a fascinating introduction to its subject, lit up with humour and packed with illustrative examples from every continent. Dr. Nida as Secretary for Translations of the American Bible Society has travelled widely and gathered much material direct from missionaries, but he also reveals himself as a competent student of his subject though he reserves for annotations the more technical terminology and comment of the anthropologist. His pages sparkle with many a gem of cultural interpretation and illuminating incident.

The study of the simpler societies of mankind, which has by consent been the usual field of the social anthropologist, has gained immeasurably in interest and value during the last generation by the functional approach, with which the name of Malinowski in particular is connected. An earlier

evolutionary school was concerned to demonstrate the place the various types of human society, from the simpler to the more complex, occupied in the evolutionary scale; while the diffusionist was devoted to studying the spread of cultures by the wanderings of peoples, and if Egypt as the original centre seized his imagination he might well become unduly fascinated by it. While these two lines of approach both bring some purpose into the study and so surpass the mere aggregation of queer customs and beliefs as a kind of old curiosity shop for entertainment merely, yet it is the functional idea that has provided the key to reveal the living society at work. The total society in all its aspects is then viewed as an organism in which each several part sustains some function in relation to the whole. It is the personal satisfaction experienced by those who observe the custom, and not the dull inertia of habit merely, which accounts for its survival. Moreover — and here the missionary is very directly concerned — no single element in the cultural pattern can be removed without modifying the whole. The would-be reformer must therefore beware or he will disturb much more than he has bargained for. This is not an argument against attempted change but rather, as Malinowski was at pains to emphasize, that he takes the trouble to understand what he is about. All this Dr. Nida appreciates, and his presentation is a vivid reinforcement of Malinowski's emphasis.

Two aspects of the life of the simple societies are of especial concern to the missionary: the sphere of social relations, and the realm of belief; and to these Dr. Nida devotes his two longest chapters. Basic to any form of social structure is the biological family consisting of husband, wife, and offspring. Here two sets of relationship are involved: the husband-wife relation and the parent-child relation; and both must be taken into account in estimating the functioning of the institution. Thus while the former may be somewhat lax in controlling the relations between the sexes, the latter may be exceedingly strict in demanding recognized marriage for legitimization of offspring and thus giving a child its place in the society. In respect of marriage as a social institution various questions demand investigation. Two that have occupied a large place in missionary thinking are the so-called bride-price as the legal method of contracting a marriage, and the practice of polygamy.

The term bride-price is unfortunate but no alternative has yet secured general acceptance since there is still some debate as to the precise function of the practice. That it definitely does not connote purchase of the wife has long been recognized by students of the subject, though many missionaries have condemned the practice on this alleged objection. Dr. Nida is definite in rebuttal, and takes the view now widely held that the bride-price is compensation granted by the bride-groom's family to the bride's for the loss of a member. It certainly serves to stabilize the marriage and to that extent to strengthen the moral order in these simple societies. The recognition of the practice by Christian missions, when accompanied with a pledge of monogamy, has been based on this fact as in the interests of the society during a transition period. The commercialization of the custom, however, with the gradual disintegration of tribal society through the labour migration of the men, has in these

cases led to cash payment by the bridegroom-wageearner which weakens the traditional sanction.

The practice of polygamy, while not limited to Africa, is there an issue especially acute. Of its two possible forms, polyandry and polygyny, it is the latter that is usually meant by the popular use of the wider term. Many reasons, not mutually exclusive, are advanced for the practice. Nevertheless it is by no means universal since there are restrictions: natural, in the balance of the sexes, with a surplus of females over males of some ten to twenty per cent (though differential nuptial age may raise it); and economic, expressed in the demand of bride-price, which means that outside the circle of those enjoying status, such as chiefs, only the man of means can afford to be a polygamist. The much-debated missionary issue, from the days of Bishop Colenso, has been whether the polygamist, who entered upon his matrimonial obligations before having knowledge of Christian requirements, might be admitted to baptism as he was on confession of faith, or whether he must retain only one wife. The latter has been the generally, though not universally, accepted position. However, no reputable Christian leadership would accept the fulfilment of this condition unless coupled with evidence of satisfactory arrangements made for the wives no longer retained. The allegation that such wives may be driven to prostitution on this ground, to which Dr. Nida appears to lend some countenance, is not easy to substantiate and has often been countered by experienced missionaries. Prostitutes in African urban centres come rather from the girls who seek 'life' in the glare of neon lights. In actual experience the issue is not so much that of 'good-faith' polygamists, who are inevitably a rapidly dwindling number, as of the modern African, often enough well educated by western standards, who, with full knowledge of the Christian demands, is content to become polygamist and remain outside the baptized membership of the Church while his wives are admitted to full standing. In more than one region of Africa this has led to a disproportionately high female membership. There is at last available, on all these related issues, a standard and authoritative account in an inquiry promoted jointly by the International Missionary Council and the International African Institute — the *Survey of African Marriage and Family Life*, edited by Arthur Phillips — to which Dr. Nida makes frequent reference. In concluding his survey of the problems raised by differing social cultures he wisely directs attention to the temptation inherent in this situation for every missionary: "It has been all too easy to think that by substituting our own social institutions and organizations, one could overcome the sin which poisons all inter-human relationships . . . Only the reconciliation of man with God through Jesus Christ can so change the hearts of men that by the guidance of God's Spirit all human relationships can be sanctified".

In the realm of belief a reliable analysis of the situation is extremely difficult since in the nature of the case the elements composing it are much more elusive. E. B. Tylor long ago urged the greatest caution in this sphere and recorded cases where early facile denials of religious belief were later contradicted by more patient observers. However, much has now been done in many areas that justifies an interim attempt at

a general picture. The term animism, once employed to cover the situation more or less completely, is now seen to be only partially relevant. At one end a less precise 'animatism' (as proposed by R. R. Marett) is recognized to exist, while at the other the ancestral spirits themselves are often enough found to be regarded as intermediaries between the living clan and the Supreme Being. Here the symposium, *African Ideas of God*, edited by Edwin W. Smith, offers the most recent findings, to which Dr. Nida admits himself indebted.

The place of magic in relation to the rest is a subject of much inconclusive debate. Of this Dr. Nida is well aware, and cautions against any confusion of magic and religion. He might have gone further and indicated the difference between witchcraft and sorcery (or black magic i.e. anti-social) as Evans-Pritchard first reported it among the Azande and since paralleled in a number of areas, with distinct vernacular terms for the two. The former is the destructive action of an infected personality (often a kind of vampirism) without any use of material medium, rite, or spell, whereas sorcery uses all of these. It is witchcraft rather than sorcery that is most dreaded in these communities. The witch-doctor is strictly, in this capacity, the detector of witches on behalf of the threatened community, and the term is therefore best kept distinct from that of medicine-man or doctor pure and simple.

In the changing society produced by migration of labour reverence for the departed ancestors, rooted to the ancestral soil, is a fading faith, but the practice of magic survives and becomes readily adapted to the new environment in an attempt to close the circle of security, which has always been its function. As Dr. Otto F. Raum once emphasized, it can only be displaced in the last resort by the offer of a greater security, contained in Paul's triumphant assertion of faith in Romans 8 : 35-39.

We can do no more than refer to the valuable chapter on language in which would-be translators are put upon their guard with many a warning derived from past experience on the various pitfalls that await them. Those already familiar with the author's more technical *Learning a Foreign Language* and *Bible Translating* will appreciate the authority with which this chapter is written.

This is altogether a notable book both in what it attempts and in what it achieves, and is to be warmly commended as required reading for any outgoing missionary.

Readers' Corner

From the Rev. Dr. H. G. Meecham of Rhos-on-Sea:

In Dr. J. Harold Greenlee's useful account of "Iva Clauses and Related Expressions" (*The Bible Translator*, Volume 6, No. 1, January 1955, pp. 12ff.) he cites 1 Thessalonians 2 : 16 (*εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας πάντοτε*) as showing a prepositional phrase of *result*.