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THE EDITOR

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During the past three years, under the auspices of the United Bible Societies, a new kind of training programme for Bible translators has been developed. Translators have been invited to gather in some central place for a period of several weeks. At these 'Institutes' lectures are given by members of Bible Society translations departments' staff on communication theory and the linguistic and anthropological backgrounds to translation, as well as on Biblical backgrounds and problems of text and exegesis. Translators are able also to work on their own translations under the supervision of experts and we believe there has been a significant improvement in the quality of translation work as a result of these efforts. To date, Institutes have been held in the Philippines, Peru, New Guinea, Thailand as well as in Upper Volta, Cameroun, Congo and Kenya.

The above programme could not have been carried out had there not been a parallel development in the appointment of Translations Consultants at a number of strategic centres round the world; these are experts whose services are at the disposal of Bible translators in the areas where they reside. Some have specialized in Biblical studies, others in the field of anthropology and/or linguistics but whatever the area of specialization they are required to have some competence in all these fields. At the invitation of the American Bible Society and under the chairmanship of Dr E. A. Nida, Translations Secretary of the American Bible Society, an international workshop for Translations Consultants and other members of the staff of Translations Departments was held during the first half of May, 1966, at Echo Lake, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. Delegations were present from the Bible Society of India, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the National Bible Society of Scotland, the Netherlands Bible Society, the Philippine Bible Society and the United Bible

Societies as well as from the American Bible Society. We also had the benefit of consultation with a University Professor from Nigeria. The discussions may be grouped under the following heads: (1) Training Programmes; (2) Questions of Policy; (3) Programme of publishing helps, (*a*) for translators and (*b*) for readers; (4) Basic research programmes.

1. Training Programmes

The experience gained in Institutes during the past few years came under review. They have been planned largely in terms of general orientation; it is felt that in the future we may have to pay more attention to specific and restricted goals, i.e., related to linguistics or anthropology, to Greek, Hebrew, New Testament or Old Testament. Hitherto they have been planned to meet the needs of the 'average missionary translator'; in future we hope to plan some programmes specifically for highly competent translators, many of whom are among the national translators whose number is rapidly increasing. It is becoming necessary to take into account the distinct levels of competence in the use of an intermediate language (e.g., English, French, or Spanish), and to co-ordinate lecture material with a greater emphasis on an inductive approach, drawing out the theory and principles of translation from an examination of actual texts.

It was generally recognized that while concepts derived from linguistics and communication theory are valid and important for Bible translators there is real need for these concepts to be communicated more effectively, particularly to the translator who is rendering the Scriptures into his own mother tongue. Dr Nida is preparing a manuscript on *The Theory and Practice of Translating* which will pay particular attention to this aspect of training.

Many translators would derive greater benefit from attendance at Institutes if their basic training had been more adequate. Is it possible for the Bible Societies to organize a scheme of scholarships for those who might profit from such further training? The United Bible Societies has been asked to discover an answer to that question, which will take into account the number of persons who might be able to accept training and the financial resources that could be made available. The enquiry will take into consideration the nature of the preparation which would be required and the extent to which local facilities are available.

It may be that by establishing and maintaining contacts with existing seminaries and universities in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the Bible Societies will find it possible to encourage the development of courses in the fields of linguistics and communication as well as the strengthening of programmes in Biblical languages and exegesis. There may be scope for encouraging a programme of visiting professors. These are all matters upon which further enquiry has been asked for.

There is an increasing demand for the services of Translations Consultants and a need for them to have the help of competent assistants; persons with an adequate academic background and the ability to communicate their skills to others. And it is becoming increasingly evident that there is need for

a Manual which sets out the responsibilities of Translations Consultants, not merely for their own guidance but the guidance of the Bible Societies in whose areas they are at work as well as of those by whom they are appointed, for these are not always the same.

2. Questions of Policy

The gathering at Echo Lake was not intended for laying down policy for the Bible Societies. Nevertheless certain matters were discussed because it is important for Bible Societies with different traditions to understand each other's policies in order to work together.

For example, special difficulties frequently accompany demands for the revision of existing Bibles. There may be a relatively vocal demand for revision but the nature of the demand needs to be carefully assessed. On the other hand, a version may be badly in need of revision although there is little or no recognition of the need. Occasionally, church leaders may insist that a revision is required but they are unable to provide personnel for the work. Often, a demand for a 'slight revision' hides the need for an extensive revision or even for a 'new translation'. Many people display reluctance to accept any new version, and so it is desirable to pay attention, in publishing a revised version, to such matters as improved format, intelligibility of language and marginal helps such as cross references.

Translators are increasingly becoming familiar with the terms, 'formal equivalent translations' and 'dynamic equivalent translations'. The contrast may be expressed in other ways. The former may be described as translations which are as literal as possible, while the latter may be thought of as translations which are as idiomatic as possible. Translations differ in the degree to which they may be ascribed to one or the other type. Another way of describing 'dynamic equivalence' is to say that the translator must seek to discover the closest natural equivalent of the source language. A useful purpose can be served by the publishing of certain Scripture selections, e.g. Luke 15, in order to obtain the reaction of readers and prepare the way for more satisfactory translations.

What is to be done when several books of the Old Testament have been translated in a language in which it is unlikely that an entire Old Testament will ever be required? Should they be published and bound together in a single volume? Such a practice would run counter to Bible Society traditions. If any such request is made the following principles would need to be observed: (1) The Books of Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah should always be included, (2) additional books should be chosen in terms of (*a*) cultural relevance and (*b*) absence of any evident doctrinal bias, (3) there should be no prospect of a complete Old Testament in the foreseeable future, (4) the publication should contain a clear indication of the limited nature of the book and (5) the Old Testament materials should not be bound with the New Testament to provide the semblance of a Bible. These principles have an obvious relevance when the language concerned is one that is used only at the level of lower education or is not used for educational purposes at all. They also have to be kept in mind in those situations where Bible Society

personnel are asked to give advice on the order in which the books of the Old Testament should be translated.

The problem of so-called 'Abridged Bibles' was extensively discussed. While the idea of such publications is not welcome in some quarters, there is considerable evidence of a growing demand for them. Some Bible Societies, e.g. the Netherlands Bible Society, the Norwegian Bible Society and the Württemberg Bible Society, have issued such publications. If they are regarded as introductions to the whole Bible then they can be a powerful tool in the hands of those whose responsibility it is to encourage the use of the Bible. Nevertheless, the work of selection has to be done with great care in accordance with carefully considered principles and there was general agreement on the need for further study of the whole subject.

3(a). Publishing Helps for Translators

There is already an impressive list of published helps for translators, which are made available free of cost to *bona fide* Bible translators. Yet much remains to be done. Detailed consideration was given to a number of projects, some of which are already in hand. They include New Testament and Old Testament Wordbooks with special reference to the problems of translators; a revised list of commentaries recommended to translators, together with a list of suitable works in French and German; and more detailed help in the preparation of manuscripts and in the tedious but very important task of proof reading.

Some years have now passed since the publication of *A Translator's Handbook on Mark* by Nida and Bratcher. In the light of its use—and few commentaries have had to face up to more stringent testing—it is felt that in future Handbooks (and Handbooks on Luke and on Acts are in various stages of preparation) greater emphasis should be placed on grammatical structure than on lexical equivalents. There should also be more detailed analysis of longer passages, paragraphs rather than sentences, together with the important linking words whose use varies so much from one language to another, and a more general treatment of semantic problems. In this connection, there was a recognition of the importance of translations in 'common language' in the more widely used international languages such as Spanish, French and English. The term 'common language' is here used to denote versions which use a somewhat restricted vocabulary and the simpler grammatical constructions of a language. While the primary purpose of these versions is to help those with limited educational backgrounds to appreciate the message of the Bible, they can also serve to help the translator in making the necessary transformations from the grammatical structures of the original source languages into the receptor language.

3(b). Publishing Helps for Readers

Many different topics under this head were discussed.

(i) The present section headings published by the U.B.S. require editing before they are republished. Though they are fairly adequate as a series for

use in an English publication and as a basis for adaptation into Indo-European languages, they are not adequate to fulfil the original purpose for which this series was prepared, namely, as a guide for translators working in languages with radically different grammatical and stylistic structures.

(ii) The value of glossaries and marginal helps along lines already approved is beyond question. Certain steps should however be taken to encourage their wider use. It is proposed to prepare models for the use of translators together with a clear explanation of the criteria to be employed in the selection of those notes which would be relevant in different types of constituencies.

(iii) A similar programme of encouragement is needed with reference to the use of maps and illustrations which would be helped by a pooling of the resources of the different Bible Societies.

(iv) More attention needs to be given to the provision of prefaces and introductions. Prefaces which draw attention to special features of a publication, e.g., the orthographic system employed, the principles underlying the particular translation or revision, or the type of constituency for which the version has been prepared may be of considerable service to the reader. Introductions, on the other hand, are intended to help the reader in his approach to the contents of a particular book, whether that be the whole Bible, a New Testament or some portion of the New Testament. These are a common feature of publications of the Scriptures in major European languages and a need for them exists in other areas of the world.

4. Basic Research Programmes

In recent years, the Translations Department of the American Bible Society has led the way in gaining recognition for the need to pioneer programmes of organized basic research related to problems of translation. It was therefore appropriate that some time at Echo Lake was devoted to a discussion of projects on which certain members of the staff had been engaged. Among them the following may be mentioned:

(*a*) Although much attention has been paid to problems associated with orthography there is still need for a careful analysis to arrive at principles of wide application. The concept of 'scientific orthographies' has been interpreted too narrowly in the past, relying at first too heavily on the science of phonetics and later on the phonemic and morphophonemic levels of descriptive linguistics. The concept needs to be widened with reference to information theory and ethnology, in terms of the goals associated with orthographies, studied both from the standpoint of the individual and society.

(*b*) The role of language in multi-lingual societies particularly in emerging nations.

In many areas the Bible Societies have a grave responsibility because of the important place of the Bible in the life of the Church and through education in the life of the nation.

(*c*) There is urgent need for a treatment of the problems involved in the production of materials for new literates. This is in part directly the work of translators and underlies the concern for versions in 'common language' to which reference has already been made. But the problems involved need to

be studied on a wider basis and in co-operation with those who are concerned with the production and distribution of Scriptures so that the most effective types of publications can be provided.

Conclusion

From what has been said it will be seen that the Translations Departments of the Bible Societies are launched on a programme which can only be carried out through working and planning together and in which there is room for wider co-operation than in the past. In the near future some of the new insights relating to the programmes of Translators' Institutes will be applied. The Institute to be held in Japan for three weeks from August 14th, to which translators and potential translators in three major languages, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, have been invited, is experimenting with new methods.[1] Other Institutes are already being planned for 1967 in Zambia, India and Nigeria; perhaps also in South Africa.

As it develops we look forward to new patterns in the work. Already the increasing interest in the world-wide work of the Bible Societies on the part of the Bible Societies in Europe is bearing fruit. The growing number of national translators has already had a healthy influence on our plans. The coming together of the Orthodox Churches with the rest of the Christian Church through the ecumenical movement will lead to new insights. No less, the approval by the Second Vatican Council of co-operation between Roman Catholics and others in the work of Bible translation brings both challenge and opportunity.

Assuredly, it seems to us who were present, that the Workshop in Echo Lake was held at 'the right time'.

[1] This issue goes to press before the Institute has been held.

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