

THE BIBLE TRANSLATOR

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EDITOR: William D. Reyburn

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: Dorothy F. Jenks

EDITORIAL BOARD: C. Arangaden, Wilfred J. Bradnock, John J. Kijne, Eugene A. Nida

EDITORIAL

SOME QUESTIONS ON THE CLIMATE

A few years ago—it seems like only yesterday—Roman Catholic priests began buying Bible Society Scriptures, distributing them and asking a very natural question: ‘Can’t we get together with the Protestants and make a new translation?’ In some quarters the response was a joyful ‘yes’, in others a forthright ‘no’, and some Protestants said they preferred to ‘watch and wait’. While they have watched since Vatican II, interconfessional projects have pushed ahead with the quiet momentum of a moving iceberg. In 1960 you could count them all on one hand. Today, there are a hundred and ten interconfessional projects at some stage of development. No doubt about it, some will be aborted; some will endure the embryonic phase so long they will never see the light of day. Nevertheless, the rate of growth is so phenomenal that a high degree of success is nearly certain.

The map which charts the course for interconfessional translation projects has been drawn and put into operation: ‘Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible’. Section II entitled *Procedures* lists as the very first consideration ‘climate for cooperation: whether a revision or new translation can be undertaken jointly in a particular area depends largely upon the climate established by the respective constituencies . . . any cooperative undertaking will need for its success as wide an agreement as is possible on the part of the constituencies concerned’.

Since these principles were published and have been read throughout the world, some church bodies have expressed strong disapproval, others have rejoiced in them as a step toward a Biblical renewal for all churches. Still others have raised certain queries which need to be answered. A sample of questions and answers follows:

Q.: Do the Bible Societies now intend to make every translation project an interconfessional one with Roman Catholics?

A.: No. Only the agreeing constituencies can do this.

- Q.: What if part of the Protestant Churches agree to cooperate with the Roman Catholics and part refuse?
- A.: The Bible Societies are committed to the widest possible circulation of the Scriptures to *all*. Therefore, they will work with *all*.
- Q.: In translation this could mean the Bible Societies would be required to assist in the preparation of two texts, one cooperative and one non-cooperative, could it not?
- A.: The Bible Societies, having as their aim to seek the widest possible circulation of the Scriptures to *all*, would be required in such cases to assist both cooperative and non-cooperative translation projects.
- Q.: Is it the responsibility of the Bible Societies to take the initiative in securing interconfessional cooperation for translation?
- A.: No. It is the responsibility of the Bible Societies to inform the whole constituency of the possibilities of such cooperation and to explain to them both technical and organizational aspects. Where, as a result of such explanations, a favorable climate for cooperation results, the *rapprochement* making possible the translation project must still be the initiative of the constituencies.
- Q.: If the Roman Catholics have highly qualified translators and the Protestants only inferior ones, should the translation project go ahead?
- A.: Yes. However, not as a committee of equals, for the poorly trained Protestants are apt to act defensively to cover up their lack of knowledge. In such cases it is best to have the qualified side produce the draft of the translation and for a special review committee on the other side to examine it as it is being drafted. It is assumed that a translations consultant from the Bible Societies will insure that the 'Guiding Principles' are being followed and that the translation conforms to all the linguistic principles formulated jointly for the interconfessional project.
- Q.: What can be done to make certain that a Roman Catholic bishop does not dominate a drafting committee?
- A.: Having a headstrong individual dominating a committee is not a problem peculiar to Roman Catholics. Protestants have their share. The best way to avoid such situations is to follow Bible Society procedures, whereby all prospective members of a translation team are carefully interviewed by a translations consultant before the project begins.
- Q.: Does the publication of an interconfessional translation mean that the old 'Protestant Bible' will be discontinued?
- A.: No. If this is the only text that will be used by the non-cooperating bodies, it will, under normal conditions, continue to be published.
- Q.: Since the 'Guiding Principles' call for the imprint of the Bible Society and the imprimatur of the 'appropriate Roman Catholic ecclesiastical authority', does this mean all Protestants will have to carry Bibles with a Roman Catholic imprimatur?

- A.: No. In the first place, Section H of the 'Guiding Principles', like all the rest of that document, refers only to interconfessional translations produced in a climate favorable to the entire procedure. A translation produced under any other circumstances would not follow these procedures. The imprimatur, like the Apocrypha, is placed only in publications for those who desire it.
- Q.: Are we correct in using the term 'Common Bible' now that Protestants and Roman Catholics are working together in translation?
- A.: No. The term 'Common' as applied to the Holy Scriptures is a wrong designation. The usage of 'common' and 'interconfessional' means: different denominations working together on a translation.
- Q.: Does not the fact that the 'Guiding Principles' were published jointly by the Bible Societies and the Roman Catholic Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity imply that interconfessional translation efforts are aimed at creating church unity?
- A.: Interconfessional translation work does not mean that Roman Catholics and Protestants renounce any of their historical dogma. It only means they are agreed to put the meaning of the Scriptures in the text of the translation and to place their doctrinal instruction elsewhere, in the commentaries where they belong. As long as this is the case, it should be evident that the Bible Societies are seeking to fulfil their historic role: namely the widest possible distribution of the Scriptures. Those who have felt it unwise for the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity to collaborate with the Bible Societies will now notice that publications from the United Bible Societies and Rome will appear under the editorship of the 'Vatican Department of Common Bible Work'.

EDITORIAL BOARD OF 'THE BIBLE TRANSLATOR'

The United Bible Societies' Executive Committee, upon the recommendation of the UBS Translations Committee, approved the appointment in February, 1969, of the following persons to serve for three years as the members of the Editorial Board of *The Bible Translator*. This new Board will be responsible for the articles appearing in the July issue.

Dr Roland C. Stevenson, Nairobi
 Dr Heber F. Peacock, Abidjan
 Dr William L. Wonderly, Mexico City
 The Rev. C. Arangaden, Bangalore
 Dr William A. Smalley, Bangkok