

be made understandable to all levels of readers. Various translations are therefore necessary, corresponding to the "needs and circumstances" of the prospective readers (120 ff.) and the various purposes to be served (122 ff.); yet translation must not deform the message contained in the source text. Nida's definition of Bible translation is thus:

Translation consists in the reproduction in the receptor language of the message of the source language in such a way that the receptors in the receptor language may be able to understand adequately how the original receptors in the source language understood the original message.

The problems which arise in doing this, and how to solve them, are dealt with in three carefully structured chapters. The first, "Signs", (1-39) discusses the nature of signs, particularly linguistic signs, as fundamental elements of communication. The second, "Sense", (40-90) discusses the meaning of signs, again particularly linguistic signs, on various levels. Signs combine with the previous (linguistic or cultural) knowledge which may be presupposed in the reader to make accessible the meaning of a text. The third chapter, "Translation", (91-137) uses the findings of the first two to present the principles, possibilities and limits of Bible translation as a three-stage process of analysis, transfer and reconstruction, all related to translational practice. The book concludes with six pages of bibliography, references having been largely avoided in the body of the book.

3rd level: "Seeing as it were through a sign to its broader implications."

More decisively than before, Nida bases his treatment on the semiotic principle that all communication takes place with the help of (linguistic and behavioural) signs; that these signs are related (by the producer and by the receptor) to meaning, and that a translation must transfer the relation of sign and meaning in a source language and culture to a relation of sign and meaning in a receptor language and culture.

It is not to be expected that all the problems raised will be fully discussed within the limits of a series of lectures. Some of the presentation (e.g. the definition of translation, 119, and the discussion of paraphrase, 93) may thus need to be modified if *Bible* translation is not, as here, expressly in the centre of interest. As an introduction to the subject, this book is however extremely stimulating and fruitful, not only for Bible translators, but for all who have to do with translation, whether in theory or in practice.

KATHARINA REISS

Bruce [D.] Chilton's **Beginning New Testament Study** London: SPCK 1986. xii+196 pp., £5.95. ISBN 0 281 04210 1

Contains a useful chapter (pp. 95-119) on English translations of the New Testament, and editions of the Greek text, entitled "Which translation? And how to use it". Of the three main reasons for new translations, namely newly discovered manuscripts, changes in the receptor language, and changes in the understanding of the translator's task, he pays most attention to the third.

“. . . In the nature of the case, a translation cannot be truly ‘literal’” (97). The discovery of formal correspondences is only a first step towards translation: “the job of translation also takes the translator into the subjective realm of deciding how the impact made by a phrase in one language can be approximated in another language” (99)—something not to be confused with paraphrase. Prof. Chilton’s discussion is illustrated with reference to particular texts, such as John 2.4 and Rom. 13.10b, and particular versions.

TEV (=GNB) wins praise for its clarity: “It is not only linguistically more direct, it is also conceptually simpler than any other major rendering”; but in Rom. 13.10b, “to love, then, is to obey the whole Law”, the “search” (by “those responsible for TEV”) “for the simplest rendering has . . . interfered with the basic accuracy of their work” (107). TEV is also commended for “basing [the] translation on sound and accessible textual work”, in this respect setting, Prof. Chilton hopes, “a standard which future translators will at least try to attain” (108). By contrast, “the NIV represents a retreat from the ideal of dynamic transference, and a fresh attempt at formal correspondence” (109).

A section entitled “Choosing a version” begins by eliminating paraphrases such as the Living Bible, and continues by referring to the varying needs of different groups of readers; in any case, “an edition with a preface should be sought, so that the reader can be informed of the principles of translation which were followed” (112), and the standard (i.e. level of register) of English aimed at. Students should pay attention to the context of individual statements, and compare a variety of translations. The RSV is commended for scholarly use, though of course “among scholars working in higher education, use of the New Testament in Greek is assumed to be regular practice” (114).

Textual problems are briefly discussed, using the endings of Mark as an example. There are suggestions for further reading.

P.E.

Mbiti, John S. *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*. New Jersey: Oxford University Press, 1986.

This new book by John Mbiti owes its origin to the Benjamin Henry Paddock lectures which he delivered in March, 1982 at the General Theological Seminary, New York City. To the original lectures more material has been added in order to widen the scope of the book. The result is a very informative and wide-ranging book on the present currents in African Christianity, a phenomenon the author describes as “fascinating,” “fresh and fragile,” “dynamic and domineering.” He sees it as echoing “in some ways . . . the experiences of the early church; in others it is creatively forging ahead in response to the situations of today. In some ways it leans heavily on the religious background of African people, in others it seeks and finds its legitimation and strength in the Bible. In some ways it is deeply African; in others it is committedly ecumenical and universal” (pp. ix-x).

The second chapter, Bible Translation and Use in the Church, is bound to be of interest to Bible Societies in Africa and to all interested in the work of