

take the first clause in a subordinate sense, meaning “although they had been judged, as all people are judged, in their physical existence” (or, “after being judged . . .”), and the second clause to be the principal one, “they may, in their spiritual existence, live as God lives (or, as God wants them to live)”.

DANIEL C. ARICHEA JR

## TRANSLATING BREATH AND SPIRIT

Dr. Daniel Arichea is a UBS Translations Consultant working with the Indonesian Bible Society.

The first article in this issue, written by Dr. Bratcher, presents a very adequate and useful discussion of *neshāmāh* (“breath”) and *ruach* (“spirit”) as these terms are used in the Bible.

The purpose of this brief article is to discuss the ways in which these two terms are treated in recent translations of the Bible in Indonesian and Tagalog. The translations used for this purpose are (1) the *Terjemahan Baru* (TB), which is the Indonesian formal correspondence translation, published in 1974, (2) *Bahasa Indonesian Sehari-hari* (BIS), which is the Indonesian common language translation (the New Testament was published in 1978, and the whole Bible is to be published in 1983) and (3) the Tagalog Popular Version (TPV), published in 1980. The article will end with some suggestions in translating these terms.

### Neshāmāh, “breath”

It seems that biblical expressions connected with *neshāmāh* can be translated literally only in the following cases:

1. When *neshāmāh* means “breath” in a literal sense. Thus in Gen 27.7, it is easy enough to translate the expression that God breathed into the nostrils of the human clay model.
2. When *neshāmāh* is linked to tiredness, amazement, or fear. For example, in Daniel 10.17, “my breath is gone” is translated naturally in the TPV as “*halos hindi aku makahinga*” (I am almost unable to breathe.)
3. When *neshāmāh* is linked to death, or the loss of life. In 1 Kings 17.17, both the BIS and the TPV have “he died”, but it would be natural to retain the biblical expression here, as for example in Tagalog “*wala na siyang hininga*” (there is no breath in him *already*), or in Indonesian “*sudah habis* (or *hilang*) *nagasnya*” (his breath is finished/gone). It should be noted that such expressions are natural only when the person talked about has just died.

In other cases, translating *neshāmāh* as “breath” would simply be unnatural. The following are just two cases:

4. When *neshāmāh* refers to God giving life. Expressions like “he gives breath” or “he gives the breath of life” are simply not natural in these two

languages. It is much more natural to make the meaning clear rather than to retain the biblical expressions. For example,

Isaiah 57.16 “he gives life” (TPV)  
 “he makes them alive” (BIS)

Job 27.3 “Habang ako’y may buhay”  
 (As long as I have life) (TPV)

In this latter example, the BIS has “*Selama Allah masih memberi nafas kepadaku*” (as long as God gives me breath) which is not as natural as “As long as God gives me *life*.”

5. When *neshāmāh* refers not to physical life but to the capacity for feeling and knowing. In both Tagalog and Indonesian “breath” just doesn’t have this function. In these cases, there are two possibilities: (a) translating the meaning of the passage directly, and (b) translating *neshāmāh* with that part of the body which is used to stand for emotive and intellectual activity, as for example, in Indonesian *hati* (physically “liver”, figuratively “heart”). More will be said about this in the discussion of *ruach* to which we now turn.

### **Ruach, “spirit”**

As with *neshāmāh*, when *ruach* has the meaning of “breath” in a literal sense, then it can also be translated as “breath”. Some examples:

Job 9.18 “He didn’t even allow me to pull my breath” (BIS) (It should be noted that the TPV here understands the verse differently by translating “he almost cuts off my breath”).

2 Th 2.8 “the breath from his mouth” (TB, BIS)  
 “his breath” (TPV)

However, in Jer 10.14 and 51.17 it is not natural to translate *ruach* as “breath”, since the idols actually have no breath. It is only natural to say that there is no breath in someone or something if that someone or something had breath in the first place.

Expressions connecting *ruach* to life-giving breath have to be restructured, since translating them literally would result in unnatural expressions. Some examples:

Isaiah 57.16 “he made them alive” (BIS)  
 “gave them life” (TPV)

Num 16.22 “he gave life to all people” (TPV)  
 “he gave life to everyone who is alive” (BIS)

Job 27.3 “as long as life is in my body” (BIS)  
 “as long as I have life” (TPV. In this translation, the two lines are combined into one line.)

Gen 6.3 “I will not allow people to live long” (TPV)  
 “I will not allow people to live forever” (BIS)

When *ruach* refers to the immaterial, invisible part of a human being which survives death, it is usually translated literally, thus *roh* (Indonesian), *espiritu* (Tagalog). This admittedly is not the best thing to do, since it gives the impression which is unbiblical that a person can be divided into different identifiable parts (body, soul, spirit). However, for lack of any better solution to

this problem, *ruach* with the above meaning will continue to be translated literally.

There are a few further comments which are related to this matter.

(a) When *ruach* is used with other terms, the sum of which is the entire self, then some other expressions may be used, for instance,

1 Cor 7.34 "the whole mind-body" (BIS. This expression means the total person. See further below.)

(b) There are several expressions which are rather hard to translate, since they have no equivalents in these two languages. Some examples are 1 Cor 5.3-4 and Col 2.5. It simply does not make sense to say that one can be present "in spirit". Perhaps one way of avoiding the problem is a restructuring like, "You should act as though I am present with you" or "You should consider me present, even though I am not", or "Although I am not actually with you, I want you to think and act as though I am really there with you".

(c) When *ruach* is used in the context of someone dying, then some other term can be substituted, for instance,

John 19.30 "His breath was cut off" (BIS)  
"He surrendered his life" (TPV)

Luke 23.46 "my life" (TB)  
"my self" (BIS).

When *ruach* refers to the inner being, the will, the intellect, or the emotions, then it is treated in several ways.

(a) It may be translated with whatever word there is in the language which refers to the seat of emotion or intellectual activity or both. Some examples:

Ps 77.3 "my spirit faints"  
"my heart faints" (BIS)  
Gen 41.8 "his heart was perplexed" (TB)  
Gen 26.35 "my heart is bitter" (TB)  
Ps 32.2 "his mind (or life) is that of a deceiver" (TB)  
Ec 7.9 "angry in the heart" (TB)  
Acts 17.16 "his inner being got hot" (TPV)  
1 Pet 3.4 "a gentle character" (BIS, TPV)

It is interesting to note that the TB, which is generally a formal and literal translation of the source text, nevertheless translates *ruach* as *hati* in many passages where *ruach* refers to emotion or intellectual activity.

(b) At other times, *ruach* is translated as the total self, and the appropriate emotion is then made explicit in the translation. Some examples:

1 Kg 10.5 "All this made the queen amazed and impressed" (BIS)  
"The queen was really impressed" (TPV)  
Job 15.13 "You are angry with the Lord" (BIS)  
Jos 2.11 "We became very much afraid" (BIS)  
1 Cor 4.21 "with gentleness" (BIS)  
Phil 1.27 "remain under one purpose" (TPV)  
John 12.33 "he greatly pitied" (TB)

This is also the case with passages where *ruach* is used to refer to God-given abilities or qualities. Expressions like "full of the spirit" or "full of the spirit of wisdom" are not commonly used in these two languages, except within the

church, and as a result of the influence of traditional translations of the Bible. Furthermore, an expression like “full of the spirit” sometimes takes on a negative meaning, for it is used to describe a person who is under the power or influence of evil spirits. It is because of this that it is much more appropriate to determine the actual meaning of the biblical expression, and then make this meaning clear in the translation. Some examples:

Deut 34.9 “The Lord filled to overflowing Joshua with wisdom” (BIS)

Num 27.18 “He is an intelligent person” (BIS)

2 Kg 2.15 “The power of Elijah has already moved to Elisha!” (BIS)

### Some suggestions for translating Biblical terms for a person

1. First of all, we should be aware of the ways in which a person is described in the language we are translating into. This includes an awareness of words used for this purpose, and the functions of these words. In Indonesian, for example, some of the words used to describe a person are as follows:

*hati* (literally “liver”, figuratively “heart”)

—the seat of feeling or emotion or understanding

—the person himself.

It is interesting to note that an Indonesian does not think of *hati* as *liver* when used in the figurative sense, but usually translates *hati* as *heart*. However, the literal word for “heart (*jantung*) is not used figuratively, except when it is combined with *hati*, in *jantung-hati* (heart-liver), meaning “sweetheart”.

*jiwa* (“soul”, “life”, “mind”)

—the invisible, immaterial part of a person

—mind or emotion, as in *sakit-jiwa* (“sick of mind” or “insane”)

—people, “how many *jiwas* are there?”

—life

*nyawa*

—life principle, that which causes someone or something to be alive.

Example: “He has no more *nyawa*” (“he is dead”).

—life

—spirit, soul. Example: “*Nyawa* has separated from the body”

—energy, enthusiasm.

2. We should not expect that a single equivalent in our own language will match a Biblical term precisely. For example, it is apparent from the discussion above that *ruach* has a wider area of meaning than the Indonesian word *roh*. We must therefore avoid the temptation of making *roh* equivalent to *ruach*.

One other example. Indonesian culture is similar to Biblical culture in the sense that a person is not talked about as being divided into different segments. It is much more natural to talk of the whole person, rather than parts of a person. This has important implications for translation, as for example in Luke 10.27: “all your heart” . . . “all your soul” . . . “all your strength” . . . “all your mind”.

A literal translation of this would be rather unnatural because it would divide a person into separate parts, and it would be very redundant since at least two of the terms can stand for the whole person. Therefore it is much more natural to translate the meaning of the verse, which is that a person should love God

with all of his being, that is, completely, and such love will be shown in the way he lives, in the way he acts, and in the way he thinks. In Indonesian, it is therefore possible to translate the first two expressions with a single expression, that is *jiwa-raga* (literally "life-body"). The expression means all that a person is, both physically and spiritually.

3. Biblical expressions should not be introduced into a language if these expressions are not natural and are not commonly used, for instance "full of the spirit", and so on.

4. We should not try to create new expressions in the language when the available terms are already sufficient to translate the meaning of Biblical terms. For example, in Indonesia, the word *hati* has such a wide range of meaning that it overlaps with *ruach* in many ways. When the literal translation for *ruach* (that is, *roh*) is not adequate to cover a particular meaning of *ruach*, then the temptation to look for new terminology should be avoided, especially if it is discouraged by proper analysis that the particular meaning of *ruach* can be adequately conveyed by *hati*.

JACOB A. LOEWEN

## CLEAN AIR OR BAD BREATH?

Dr. Jacob Loewen is a UBS Translations Consultant resident in Canada.

My title is not a question about air pollution in large cities, or about infections that cause people's breath to smell. It is a question of how to adequately translate the concept of *spirit* in such biblical expressions as *evil spirit*, *unclean spirit* and *holy spirit* in African languages.

A group of Africans was learning how to identify the components of meaning of words that are difficult to translate. To practice their newly acquired skill they were listing all the essential components of the words in their language which covered the area of meaning of *spirit*. This list included some ten terms, among them the names of several kinds of evil spirits, the human soul/spirit, and so on. There were also three expressions from the existing Bible in their language: *bad breath*, *dirty breath*, and *red/clean breath* which represented the translation of "evil spirit, unclean spirit", and "Holy Spirit" respectively. (In this language *red* and *clean* are either two different words which sound the same like English *whole* and *hole*, or they represent the literal and figurative meanings of the same word. *Red* is usually the first meaning people hear in unmarked contexts.) A school teacher was at the blackboard leading the group's work under the translations consultant's guidance. She had just finished getting from the group all the essential components of the natural expressions in their language; but when she came to the three expressions from the Bible listed above, she turned to the group and confidently said: "These three words have no components of meaning, isn't that right." Without hesitation the rest responded: "Yes, they have no components of meaning." When the consultant interrupted saying: "But surely the words *bad*, *dirty*, and