

good to have a regular news-sheet covering areas of concern to the village, but that is still in the future. We are looking for ways to involve women in the literacy programme as we know several good readers. It is well known in literacy work that women's ability both to speak and to read their own language is a key factor in passing on the language to the following generations. Thus we are preparing booklets covering areas of particular interest to women as well as seeking to encourage some to record their own stories.

The Urak Lawoi' New Testament is now complete in draft form and is on track for publication within two years. By that time we hope that this strategy will mean that it will find more readers waiting for it, and will take an honoured place in a wider framework of Urak Lawoi' literature.

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CURRENT TRENDS IN BIBLE TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH

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These comments have been extracted from a longer presentation which was given to UBS personnel and some others earlier this year.

– Editor

In the January 1995 issue of *The Bible Translator* there is an article written by Philip Stine entitled "Trends in Translation". That article focuses on translation theory, and in particular it reviews two recent books which the author regards as very significant. My focus here will be on translation practice (or malpractice), and on some of the trends that I have noticed, in English.

Reader sensitivity

This expression is meant to identify the increasing tendency on the part of translators (and publishers) to be aware of how potential readers will react to certain words and phrases. With such an awareness it is possible to take appropriate steps to avoid negative or hostile reaction to a new translation or revision.

Many people are now aware of the changes made in the second edition of the TEV New Testament, in which "the blood" was introduced into those passages where the Greek word *haima* had been translated "death" or "sacrifice". I had not noticed at the time that other changes were also made, again in response to "reader sensitivity". Daniel 8.14 had been rendered: "I heard the other angel answer, 'It will continue for 1150 days, during which evening and morning* sacrifices will not be offered. Then the Temple will be restored' ". The footnote was: "1150 days ... morning or 2300 days during which." The text was changed to:

"I heard the other angel answer, 'It will continue for 2300 mornings and evenings, during which sacrifices will not be offered. Then the Temple will be restored' "; and there is no footnote. Psalm 110.1 had been rendered: "The LORD said to my lord, the king, 'Sit here at my right side until I put your enemies under your feet.' " It now says, "The LORD said to my lord, 'Sit here ...' ".

In the Contemporary English Version (CEV) the concern for reader sensitivity seems to weigh quite heavily. The most famous instance of this concern is the translation of Isaiah 7.14. The section heading is "A Son Named Immanuel" and verses 13-14 run as follows: "Listen, every one of you in the royal family of David. You have already tried my patience. Now you are trying God's patience by refusing to ask for proof. A virgin* is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel." The footnote says:

virgin: Or "young woman." In this context the difficult Hebrew word did not imply a virgin birth. However, in the Greek translation made about 200 B.C. and used by the early Christians, the word *parthenos* had a double meaning. While the translator took it to mean "young woman", Matthew understood it to mean "virgin" and quoted the passage (Matthew 1.23) because it was the appropriate description of Mary, the mother of Jesus.

A large number of passages in the CEV New Testament are affected by the increased sensitivity to what impact they may have in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. This is nothing new. Some translators will know that in the third edition of the TEV New Testament (1976) the translation of *hoi Ioudaioi* in the Gospel of John was changed from "the Jews" to "the religious authorities", "the people", and other terms. (See *The Bible Translator*, October 1975, pages 401-409; reprinted in *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John*, pages 641-649.) More recently this concern has led to a number of articles and proposals for changes, some of which have been adopted by the CEV translators.

Most of the changes adopted in CEV do not go beyond what TEV has already done; but changes have been made in some passages where it is not clear that there is any bad feeling against Jews. For example, Matthew 9.18 describes Jairus (without naming him) as *archon heis*. (In the parallel Mark 5.22 and Luke 8.41 he is described as "the person in charge of the Jewish meeting place".) This had been translated as "a Jewish official" and in verse 23 "the Jewish official"; the passages have been changed to "an official" and "the official". In Luke 21.12 *eis tas sunagogas* had been translated "You will be tried in the Jewish meeting places and put in jail"; it is now "in your meeting places".

In Acts 6.9 the text was: "But some Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria were members of a group who called themselves 'Free Men' " ("members of a group" translates *ek tes sunagoges*); the revised text is "But some men from Cyrene and Alexandria were members of a group who called themselves 'Free Men' ". The identification of these men as Jews and

of the group to which they belonged as a synagogue has disappeared completely. In Acts 19.14 Sceva is identified as "a Jewish high priest"; the revision in CEV now says, "a high priest"; nothing in the context identifies him as a Jew. John 12.11 had "many of the Jewish people were turning from them and putting their faith in Jesus"; the adjective "Jewish" has now been dropped. Matthew 28.15 had been translated "The soldiers took the money and did what they were told. The Jewish people still tell each other this story." It now has "The people of Judea ..."

Some of these changes are puzzling. I get the impression that "Jews" and "Jewish" are regarded as offensive in themselves, regardless of their context. Why should Jairus not be identified as "a Jewish (synagogue) official"?

Inclusiveness

The use of inclusive language is now taken for granted by most translators in English, if not by all readers. NRSV is one of the latest translations or revisions to make a number of changes, particularly in the New Testament. Yet it seems defensive and almost apologetic about doing this. Particularly in the NT letters, NRSV translates *hoi adelphoi* by "brothers and sisters", because the writer (usually Paul) was not addressing only the male members of the churches he was writing to – he was addressing all the members. But after translating correctly the meaning of the Greek phrase in that context (that is, *hoi adelphoi* includes males and females) NRSV takes back in the footnote what it has given in the text. Romans 8.12 says, "So then, brothers and sisters ..."; the footnote is: "Gk *brothers*". Of course that is wrong. In the context *adelphoi* means "brothers and sisters" – it does not mean "brothers". The footnote should be: "Gk *adelphoi*"; and since such a footnote would be of no help to most readers, it should be deleted.

All such changes in current translations into English are limited to the use of inclusive language where people are involved. Now, however, there is a translation that takes on "God language", as it is called. It is *The Inclusive New Testament* published by Priests for Equality. This is how they describe their work:

The Inclusive New Testament is a fresh, dynamic translation into modern English, carefully crafted to let the power and poetry of the language shine forth, particularly when read aloud, while giving it an immediacy and intimacy that is rarely found in translations of the Bible. While striving to be faithful to the original Greek, we sought new and non-sexist ways to express the same ancient truths.

The Inclusive New Testament focuses on those whom society has marginalized: women, ethnic and racial minorities, lesbians and gay people, and those typecast in terms of their afflictions ... We do not refer to "the poor", but rather "poorer people" or "people in need" – to show that poverty is not an absolute, easily delineated category of people, but a relative condition that

touches everyone. "A cripple" becomes "someone who couldn't walk"; "a leper" becomes "a person with leprosy".

There is no doubting the breadth and depth of their Christian compassion and commitment. In practice, however, what happens? Sometimes, very strange things. For example, in Luke 1.7 Elizabeth is no longer barren; rather, "They (Zechariah and Elizabeth) were ... unable to conceive". And in 1.25 she thanks God for having "taken away the disgrace of our having no children." In the "household rules" in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter, there are no separate instructions for husbands and wives, but inclusive rules for "those of you who are in committed relationships" (1 Pet 2.18; Eph 4.22). And the quotation from Genesis 2.24 in Ephesians 5.31 says: "This is why one person leaves home and clings to another, and the two become one flesh" (see also Mark 10.6-8). Children and parents may become "Children, obey those responsible for you in everything ... and if you are responsible for children ..." (Col 3.20-21). Slaves and masters may be "laborers" and "employers" or "overseers" (Col 3.22-4.1); "you who are in bondage ... overseers" (1 Pet 2.18); "employees" and "employers" (Eph 6.5-9). In Philemon 16 Onesimus is Philemon's "subordinate". The prophecy from Joel quoted in Acts 2.17-21, which speaks of "male and female servants/slaves" in verse 18 is translated "the most insignificant of my people, both women and men ..."

In the whole of the passage Mark 10.17-31 there is no longer "the rich young ruler"; instead there is "someone", "the other", "the person", "the enquirer". In the episode involving the Gadarene demoniac(s) in Mark 5.1-20, Luke 8.26-39, Matthew 8.28-34, there is no way of knowing the gender of the demon-possessed person(s). In Luke, for example, we find "a person", "the demoniac", "the individual", "the demoniac", "the person", "the exorcised person", "the possessed one", "the person who had been healed", "the one who had been made whole". In the incident of the father with his demon-possessed son, the translation of Mark 9.14-24 and Matthew 17.14-20 goes to extraordinary lengths and tortures the English language to avoid saying that the cure involves a man and his son. In Luke 9.37-43, however, the two are correctly identified!

Instead of "the Son of God" we have "God's Own"; for "the Son of Man" there is "the Chosen One" and "the Promised One". "Father" applied to God is uniformly translated "Abba": "Abba God in heaven" (Matt 6.9). In John 1.45 for "Jesus son of Joseph" this translation has "Jesus of Nazareth, begot of Mary and Joseph". In John 1.32 John the Baptist says, "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and she came to rest on him." And in Matthew 8.11 we read of "the God of Sarah and Abraham, of Rebecca and Isaac, of Leah and Rachel and Jacob". (What about Hagar, and Bilhah and Zilpah?) The genealogy in Matthew 1.1-17 is similar in the way it begins: "This is the family record of Jesus Christ, descendant of Bathsheba and David, descendant of Sarah and Abraham." In Luke 3.8 John the Baptist says to his

listeners: "And don't presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Sarah and Abraham as our mother and father,' for I tell you that God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones."

To conclude: the motives are praiseworthy, but the execution leaves much to be desired. It seems to me that there is no legitimate reason for trying to obscure the gender of men and women who appear in the narratives or in parables. Who ever tells a story about "a person", "an individual", or "the one"? Where they have not badly distorted the accounts, they have turned simple and artful stories into artificial, stodgy, and irritating, not to say insulting, constructions, in a style that no teller or writer of stories would ever use. This is not, I hope, the wave of the future.

Scholarly translations

At a recent meeting which I attended the need for a translation made for scholars was discussed. James Barr read a paper in which he cited a number of passages in which modern translations (in English) have not been faithful to the form and meaning of the original text. (Many of the instances cited were from RSV/NRSV.)

There was also a session at this meeting at which the "Amsterdam School" (AS) of Bible translation was explained. I think an accurate summary statement of the AS approach is that the reader should come to the text, and not the text to the reader. That is achieved by as much verbal consistency as possible, attention to internal coherence, and reproducing as far as possible syntactic structures, key words, rhythms, and so on. There is general AS approval of the principles operating in the (Dutch) States-General version of 1617. Plans have been made to translate the whole Bible, to be published by the Dutch Bible Society. So far Judges, Ruth, Amos, Habakkuk, and Jonah have been translated.

In the United States more progress has been made toward the publication of *The Scholars Bible* as it is called. *The Complete Gospels* (Annotated Scholars Version) was published in 1991 (second, corrected edition, 1992). And *The Gospel of Mark*, by Daryl D. Schmidt (1991), is the first volume of the Scholars Bible. It comes "with Introduction, Notes, and Original Text featuring the NEW Scholars Version Translation" (front cover). The text of the translation is exactly the same as that of Mark in *The Complete Gospels*, which is attributed to Philip Sewell; but Sewell's name does not appear in *The Gospel of Mark*.

Some things in *Mark* are worth noticing, I believe. One feature is what are called "summary passages", in which the use of the imperfect tense of the verb in Greek suggests that "the scene being described happened more than once, even frequently or regularly, but the narrative is providing only one typical, or composite, example" (page 32). An example is given (1.32-34):

In the evening, at sundown, they *would* bring all the sick and demon-possessed to him. And the whole city *would* crowd around the door. On such occasions he cured many people afflicted

with various diseases and drove out many demons. He *would* never let the demons speak, because they realized who he was.

A persuasive defense of the use of inclusive language, with examples, is also given (pages 28-29).

Some of the renderings are, in my opinion, very strange. Jesus dismisses the Gadarene demoniac like this (Mark 5.18-19):

And as (Jesus) was getting into the boat, the ex-demoniac kept pleading with him to let him go along. And he would not let him, but says to him, "Go home to your people and tell them what your patron (Greek *ho kurios*) has done for you – how he has shown mercy to you."

He basileia tou theou (traditionally "the Kingdom of God") is translated "God's imperial rule": "God's imperial rule is closing in" (Mark 1.14). The title *ho huios tou anthropou* (traditionally "the Son of Man") is rendered "son of Adam" (Mark 2.28, and other places).

The call of Levi (Mark 2.14-16) is translated as follows:

As he was walking along, he caught sight of Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the toll booth, and he says to him, "Follow me!"

And Levi got up and followed him.

Then Jesus happens to recline at table in (Levi's) house, along with many toll collectors and sinners and Jesus' disciples. (Remember there were many of these people and they were all following him.) And whenever the Pharisees' scholars saw him eating with sinners and toll collectors, they would question his disciples: "What's he doing eating with toll collectors and sinners?"

I have serious trouble with the frequent changes in tense, from the punctiliar past tense, to the present, to the repetitive imperfect. This is certainly not normal American English style. And in this passage I doubt if many readers will know what "the toll booth" and "toll collectors" mean. In current usage a toll booth is where people pay a toll for crossing a bridge or using a turnpike (tollway or highway). I don't know of a toll booth where people pay taxes on imported goods, nor am I aware of a toll collector who receives such payments. And the use of "sinners" without any qualification is strange.

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Has "the rage to translate", as Harry Orlinsky calls it, died down lately? It doesn't seem to have done so. It's a free world – and, for many, an open market. What may be of concern is that instead of making the needs of readers determine the form of the text, the opportunities of the marketplace are allowed to play the decisive role in the making and selling of a translation.