REVIEWS

Duthie, Alan S.: **Bible Translations: and how to choose between them.** Exeter: The paternoster Press 1985. 127 pp., £3.95. ISBN 0 85364 400 4.

This book presents, in revised and expanded form, the substance of a series of papers first appearing in the periodical *Harvester,* with the aim of helping its readers "through the maze of modern translations of the Bible" (to quote the editor of that periodical). Dr. Duthie is well equipped to provide such help: he is a graduate of St. Andrews and Manchester Universities, with special qualifications in Hebrew, Greek and linguistics, and he is now Senior Lecturer in Linguistics in the University of Legon, Ghana.

He discusses what a language is, and suggests that the spoken words we hear or the written words we read are like the tip of the iceberg that appears above the surface. Beneath these lie vocabulary items and grammatical patterns, and beneath these again lies the meaning. Translation is not a matter of replacing significant utterances or sounds in one language by those of another; it is a matter of determining the *meaning* of those utterances or sounds and then expressing that meaning in the receptor language.

To trained Bible translators today this hardly needs to be said, but there are many Bible students who are convinced that some sacrosanctity attaches to the forms and idioms of the biblical languages, so that they ought to be reproduced in the receptor language; and there is no lack of Bible versions (modern as well as archaic) which cater to the misconception. Dr. Duthie concedes that there may be a place for such versions — in linguistic study, for example — but they do not serve the main purpose of Bible translation, which is to convey the *meaning* of the text as directly as possible. He lists about 40 English versions of the Bible from Wycliffe to the New Jerusalem Bible, and about 60 of the New Testament in the same period, and arranges them in order of intelligibility. The Good News Bible and the New Jerusalem Bible are bracketed first equal; the earlier Wycliffite version comes last. (The earlier Wycliffite version, it should be said, was not intended for general use; it was designed as a word-for-word transcription of God's law-code, i.e. the Vulgate. The later Wycliffite version, by contrast, represents a deliberate attempt "to translate after the sentence and not only after the words".)

The poetical parts of the Bible, says Dr. Duthie, should not only be printed as poetry in a translation; the language in the receptor language should make the same kind of impression on the reader or hearer as the poetry made in the original. So too the variety of style in the original should be matched by variety of style in the translation. He is right, and some claims to dynamic equivalence are insecurely founded when tested by these considerations. The presentation of the material is also important: proper paragraphing, section-headings and the like are helps to intelligibility.

Jerome's Vulgate was not written in "Vulgar" Latin (69). The translators of the Jerusalem Bible were not "the first Catholic translators" to translate into English from the original Hebrew and Greek (95-96): the translators of the Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures (from 1913 onwards) had already done so. As for the Concordant Version of the Old Testament (107), Genesis

was published in 1957 and Isaiah in 1962; the translation is said to have been completed by the time of A. E. Knoch's death in 1965, but I do not know if any more of it has appeared.

Dr. Duthie's book will prove very helpful to readers who are trying to decide which version to use; for certain purposes he advises the use of more than one.

F. F. BRUCE

Larson, Mildred L.: **Meaning-based Translation: A Guide to Cross-language Equivalence.** New York: University Press of America 1984. 537 pages. No price stated.

The overall emphasis of this book is on the importance of meaning-based translation in contrast to form-based translation. Because of the differences in linguistic structure between languages, attempts to make a meaning-based translation pose all kinds of problems of adjustments and modifications of that structure. This book is devoted to demonstrating how these problems can be solved for any language.

Dr. Larson has aimed at providing an introdution to translation that can be used in courses at universities and for self-teaching. In this reviewer's opinion, these objectives are met.

The technical vocabulary for the theory of translation can be formidable. Larson uses that vocabulary, but manages to explain it immediately in simpler terms. This makes it possible for this text to be used by those who have minimal linguistic training.

Of course, much of the material presented is similar to topics found in books on the principles of Bible translation. Biblical examples are used, but since much of the material is exemplified from other sources, the presentation will also be attractive to those interested in translating secular material.

Translation principles are treated in a new and fresh way, particularly on topics that go beyond the lexical level. Twice as many pages are devoted to translation principles applied to semantic units larger than single lexical items. So the greatest contribution of the book lies in the extensive treatment given to the larger semantic units, namely propositions, paragraphs, and entire texts.

Many examples are used to help to teach concepts. There are exercises at the end of most chapters to provide drill material for a classroom situation. The book also has a detailed bibliography of 14 pages listing a wide variety of authors.

Dr. Mildred Larson is Translation Coordinator of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, based in Dallas. She brings her wide experience to bear on the subject as she organizes the various topics in her text.

Section I presents an overview of the translation task, dealing with such issues as form and meaning, the kinds of translation, the semanic structure of language, implicit meaning, and also the steps and stages of a translation project. The fundamental principles given in the first section are expanded, explained, and applied in the other sections.

Section II deals with translation problems related to the lexicon. Section III presents translation problems of propositional structures (roughly, at clause level). Section IV is entitled Communication Relations; it discusses the relation-