

Abbreviations

ASV American Standard Version
 AT An American Translation (Goodspeed)
 BJ Bible de Jérusalem
 GNB Good News Bible (Today's English Version)
 KJV King James Version
 K-B Koehler and Baumgartner Lexicon
 NVC Nueva Versión Castellana (unpublished)
 RVR Reina Valera Revised Version (1960)
 RSV Revised Standard Version
 LXX Septuagint

CARLO BUZZETTI

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON INTRODUCTIONS IN UBS SCRIPTURES

Father Carlo Buzzetti is a UBS Honorary Translation Adviser, and was one of the translators of the Italian common language New Testament.

In planning for the forthcoming publication of the common-language Bible in Italian, and in reflecting upon some of the reactions to the already published New Testament *Parola del Signore*, I have focused some attention on the problems of what kind of introductions need to be prepared, whether for the Bible or New Testament as a whole or for individual books of the Bible. The following comments are offered to stimulate discussion.

In the Biblical publications for which the UBS is responsible, this element has become more and more important in the last few years. It would be interesting to collect and analyze the actual work that has been done so far in this area; one wonders whether the growth in importance of such introductions has or has not kept pace with a careful attention to 1) their nature and function and 2) the principles to be followed in order to be consistent with UBS norms and practices.

We can—and in fact must—apply to the preparation of introductions some of the main criteria followed in the translation of the Biblical text itself. We usually say that the translator must have 1) a good awareness of the source message to be communicated, and 2) a clear idea of the cultural situation and level of the receptors. These same requirements should apply to a good “introducer”.

Types of information

There are three general types of information which may be considered for including in such introductions, whether separately or in combination. **Type A:** In the pages that precede a new translation we may give some explanation of why such a translation has been prepared. **Type B:** In some cases we may also aim to stress the religious significance of the Bible for today. **Type C:** Almost always we desire to give some indications which help the reader to situate the Bible in its historical context (chronological, cultural) and in the context of literature (literary genres, etc.).

One may well ask whether these three types of introductory information are always to be directed to the same receptor or group of receptors. In a sense

they are, because in many cases the same reader will read the whole book. But it would be naive to think of our receptors as a single homogeneous group. In fact, the same book is to be read by different types of receptors, and in preparing such introductory matter as that mentioned above we need to think, more or less consciously, of rather different kinds of readers. I would therefore suggest the following considerations as relating to the types A, B, C, of information mentioned above:

Type A materials

When we write a preface or introduction to explain why a particular translation is offered, we have in mind chiefly those readers who already know the general situation of the Bible as translated into their own language, and at least some of whom have certain emotional attachments to a more traditional version. These people, many of whom are looked upon as church leaders, can voice their objections and complain that by multiplying translations we are merely augmenting confusion. To such people we therefore try to explain the kind of translation and how it differs from others, and to justify its existence—and its actual necessity—alongside the other and more formal versions. In fact, we can in most cases reach uneducated receptors only by passing through other and more educated people who act informally as “censors”; these include pastors, priests, teachers, etc. So we first try to make ourselves understood to them lest they, after a quick glance, put the book aside and fail to recognize and recommend it as a serious edition of the Bible. (One pastor was heard to comment that some of his people “actually thought the Spanish *Versión Popular* was the Bible”—which of course it is!)

Type B materials

When our introductory materials deal with the second point, the religious significance of the Bible for today, we are saying that the translation attempts to make the Bible understandable even to people outside the church, or to those who are “new” in the church. The so-called secular man certainly needs a non-technical level of religious language (and the text itself of a common-language translation tries to be at this level); but he also needs some brief introduction as to what the Bible means to believers and what it can also mean to him. Without this, it can happen that strong prejudices (or mere lack of interest) can discourage him from reading it, or can badly condition his understanding of the text itself.

Type C materials

When the introductions (or other helps to the reader, such as footnotes) deal with historical, cultural, or literary considerations, it is the cultural state of the reader which we have in mind; we want him to be able to avoid certain general misunderstandings to which even our ‘easy’ translation is open, and to be able to grasp certain understandings which depend upon at least a minimum familiarity with the background which was already known to the original receptors.

Presentation of the different types

If all this is true, it can be important to distinguish two, or perhaps three, different introductions (or different parts of the introduction) directed respectively toward the teacher, the non-religious man and the not-very-educated believer. Each of these have different needs, and in preparing our brief

introductory pages we need to be aware of this situation. We can now draw from this some practical suggestions.

(1) The A type introduction has to be clearly distinguished, e.g. by using a particular name for it (see the Italian *Parola del Signore*, which has a "Presentazione" and an "Introduzione"; the *Good News Bible* has a "Foreword" and a "Preface". Here the language level needs to be accessible to the uneducated reader, but it must also satisfy the special needs of the more educated and probably more critical mediators or "censors" of its distribution and use.

If we find that such an explanation needs to be more extensive than would be practical at the beginning of the book, we can comment briefly and refer to a possible appendix in which the reasons for the new translation, and some of its characteristics, are explained in detail, perhaps with some examples. Or if combined as part of a general introduction, a sub-title such as "Why a New Translation?" can be very helpful, with corresponding sub-titles for the other sections of the introduction. We should also keep in mind the possibility that some separate and more extensive publication to cover this area may be called for, such as *Good News for Everyone* or *Dios Habla a Todos* (published to introduce the *Good News Bible* and the Spanish *Versión Popular* respectively).

(2) The B introductory materials should be properly distinguished from C (see below). This section will be in a sense *kerygmatic*, but without invading the area of confessional interpretation or doctrinal bias. To be sure, this is an area of potential difficulty in interconfessional translations; but the basic UBS norms themselves are such that at all events we need to limit ourselves to general and highly important statements, and ones on which there is good agreement. Here the language level should certainly be that of the translation itself; but its literary form and certain possible sub-titles such as "The cultural value of the Bible" or "The spiritual/religious value of the Bible" are elements that are particularly free and which must be thought through carefully.

(3) Introductory materials of type C are confined principally to historical, cultural, and literary or linguistic information. A general introduction to the Old Testament and another to the New Testament may be fitting, even if each book of the Bible has its own introduction. The relationship between the Old and New Testaments needs to be mentioned, being not only a literary and historical problem but a theological one; this may be treated in an initial introduction to the entire Bible (O.T. and N.T.) or possibly handled as part of the type B material.

Type C materials may require certain technical expressions, but these should be explained either where they occur or by reference to a word list or glossary. The general language level here should be consistent with that of the text of the translation, as it is intended for the same readers.

Also, it is becoming increasingly evident that at least some limited footnotes covering type C material as related to specific passages need to be incorporated alongside the translation; such notes may, in fact, form an integrated whole with the type C introductions (and with the word list), in which each is complementary to the other and is designed to give the reader access to objective background information which is relevant to understanding the message of the text.