

ticular text in the communicative event. Particular decisions depend also on differences of structure between the pair of languages concerned (cf. examples (8) and (9)).

Thus equivalence proves to be a flexible term for a relation between a source text and a receptor language text; a relation in which each text (and each of its elements as it contributes to the text's meaning and function) calls for a re-ordering of the relevance of all the factors which influence the translation process. These relevant factors are selected and hierarchically ordered by the translator, and constitute part of his translational competence, which goes far beyond his linguistic mastery of the languages in question. The inevitable subjectivity of this selection and hierarchical ordering is not to be equated with arbitrary choice; on the contrary, it is guided by the linguistic signs contained in the text, and by the factors which objectively determine the translation process (in the phase of analysis and reverbaling).

This is what makes it possible to observe a phenomenon like equivalence, and to describe it intersubjectively, using arguments to fill the term "equivalence" with a definite content. Equivalence between source and receptor language texts, in any particular case, consists in setting up functionally relevant equivalent relations of text content(s) and form(s), in their functions of contributing to understanding the meaning of the text.

CARLO BUZZETTI

### “YOU ARE A ROCK, PETER . . . ’ IN ITALY”

**Dr. Buzzetti** is an honorary UBS translation consultant, and a lecturer at the Roman Catholic theological seminary in Bergamo Alto, Italy.

The Italian common language translation of the New Testament, entitled *Parola de Signore* (Word of the Lord) was first published in 1976 as a joint publication of the United Bible Societies and LDC, a Roman Catholic publishing house. Its success has been tremendous: by June 1982 distribution had reached 2½ million copies.

When the translation of the Old Testament was begun, late in 1976, it was decided to gather all the criticisms of the New Testament in order to prepare a revised edition of this at the same time. After two years, a good number of criticisms had been made, and their evaluation occupied several working sessions. Some criticisms were mostly emotional, but some were supported by powerful arguments, to which full weight was given in the course of revision.

Only a few passengers were judged by our readers to be wrong or coloured by confessional ideas. Among these passages, one of the most discussed was Matthew 16.18. In this note, we shall outline the translation procedure, the criticisms made, and the final revision.

#### **Matthew 16.18 in Greek**

As the first translation was made, it became clear that this text presents exegetical problems. As always, before putting it into current Italian, we had to follow the best philological opinion. One of the major authorities on this subject remains the article “*Petros*” in Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the*

*New Testament* (vol. 6, pp. 100–112) by the Protestant scholar O. Cullmann.

The person whom Jesus addresses in this passage is given different names in the Greek New Testament: *Simōn*, *Petros*, and *Kēphas* (see John 1.42). The first is a Semitic name, frequently found among Jews and Greeks at that time, but the other two were not personal names at all: they are better considered as newly-coined nicknames. *Petros* is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic word *Kefa'*, of which the usual Greek form was *Kēpha* or *Kēphas*.

Mt 16.18 contains a play on words. The Greek text uses two very similar words, *Petros* and *petra*: "You are *Petros* and upon this *petra* . . ." This would be more explicit in Aramaic, where exactly the same word would be repeated: "You are *Kefa'* and upon this *kefa'* . . ." The ideal way to reflect this in other language is to use the same word twice, where this is possible: for example, "You are a rock and upon this rock . . ."

In any case, both terms have to be understood as referring to the same person. Cullmann writes: ". . . the parallelism of 'thou art Rock' and 'on this rock I will build' shows that the second rock is the same as the first. It is thus evident that Jesus is referring to Peter, to whom He has given the name Rock" ("*Petros*", 108).

### Matthew 16.18 in Italian

In many languages it is not possible to repeat the same word, because the equivalent of *Petros* has become a personal name, while the equivalent of *petra* is a common noun, the gender of which may be different from that of the equivalent of *Petros*. The Italian linguistic situation seems at first sight to be very similar to the Greek: to translate *Petros*—*petra* we can use *Pietro*—*pietra*. But unfortunately this conveys a different meaning to the average Italian reader: first, because *Pietro* is now not a new nickname, but a common traditional personal name; and second, because *pietra* is a feminine noun similar in form to *Pietro*, but carrying no suggestion that the two have the same meaning. Indeed, *Pietro*, like "Peter" and most personal names, carries no meaning at all for the average reader or speaker.

### Matthew 16.18 in English

Other languages than Italian are in an even worse situation: in English, for example, there is no word similar to "Peter" which means "rock", so the connection between the two terms is often lost in translation, as in KJV ". . . thou art Peter, and upon this rock . . ."

Several ways have been suggested for remedying this loss:

"You are Peter, the Rock; and on this rock . . ." (NEB)

"Your name is Peter, a Rock; and upon this rock . . ." (20th Century NT)

"Your name from now on is to be Peter, Rock, and on a massive rock like this . . ." (C. B. Williams).

In these examples, the connection is restored by making it explicit that Peter means "rock". Similarly in GNB: "And so I tell you, Peter: you are a rock and on this rock foundation I will build my church . . ." In this translation it is made clear that "Peter" and "rock" denote the same entity ("you"), but it is still not easy to understand that "Peter" means "rock".

### Matthew 16.18 in Italian again

The common language translators felt that it was possible to make the identification between *Petros* and *petra* explicit, and at the same time exploit the similarity between the two words. We thus translated: “E io ti assicuro che tu sei Pietro e su di te, come su una pietra, io costruirò la mia Chiesa” (“And I assure you that you are Peter and on you, as on a rock, I will build my Church”). Our “*te*” (“you”) connected *Pietro* and *pietra*, while our “*come*” (“as”) expressed the fact that the connection was based on an image. In this way we suggested the meaning of *Pietro*.

### Criticisms and review

Some readers found our translation too explicit. It was also said that the translation reflected a Roman Catholic understanding of the text. The latter criticism was absolutely without foundation (two of the four translators, the translation consultant and the director of the project were all Protestants), but other points were well taken. There is in fact an old exegetical tradition, no longer shared by the great majority of modern scholars of any confession, but worthy of consideration, which does not make the identification between *Petros* and *petra*. Readers very sensitive to confessional differences consider this text one of the most crucial.

For all these reasons, it was decided at a review meeting in June 1981 to publish, exceptionally, an agreed statement signed by the translation consultant in the name of the translators, declaring their unanimity both in the original translation, and in its revision. In particular, the statement indicated: (a) why and how the beginning of v 18 was changed; (b) why its main clause was left unchanged; and (c) why an exceptionally long note was added, explaining the previous points, and declaring that the translation did not support any confessional interpretation. For the convenience of readers facing similar problems in other languages, we reproduce the entire text of the agreed statement, underlining points of special significance. The statement runs as follows:

In its meeting on 17–19 June 1981, the Italian translation committee responsible for the New Testament entitled *Parola del Signore* worked on its revision for an edition which will form part of the new Bible. It involves a thorough review of comments received, which will occupy several meetings. The June meeting was entirely devoted to revising the synoptic gospels. The committee considered a large number of remarks, comments, criticisms etc. received from readers of the first three gospels. Among these several related to the text Mt 16.18. The committee therefore seriously reviewed this text in the light of the criticisms. In view of these, the committee decided to publish the result of its discussion, though it realizes the quite exceptional nature of such a measure. Normally, readers note the result of such a discussion after a revision if published.

The committee wishes to emphasize that the debate was frank and very objective, and that the final results were agreed unanimously. The committee first noted that to translate the Greek verb *lego* by *assicuro* in *Parola del Signore* introduces an element of imprecision, since the solemn nature of the declaration requires the use of *dico* (“I tell”). Secondly, and much more important, the committee deemed that the simple *e* (“and”) at the beginning

of the introductory clause in Mt 16.18 does not clearly express its relation to the preceding context. Yet this relation is important, since verse 18 can only be understood and interpreted in relation to verse 17.

The promise of verse 18 is conditioned by the revelation of the Father in verse 17. In order to express this relation precisely, the committee decided to introduce verse 18 as follows: *Per questo ti dico . . .* ("for this (reason) I tell you . . .").

Thirdly, the committee studied the main clause of verse 18: "tu sei Pietro e su di te, come su una pietra, io costruirò la mia Chiesa" ("you are Peter and on you, as on a rock, I will build my Church"). The committee reviewed in detail the different exegetical positions. It noted that this translation well reflects the majority exegetical position at the present time, and this without any confessional discrimination, since this position is defended by a majority both of Catholic and of Protestant specialists, including conservative New Testament scholars belonging to the European Evangelical Alliance. For this reason the committee saw no need to change the text at this point. However, it took into account the existence of a very old traditional minority exegesis.

To avoid any misunderstanding, the committee added the following note:

"Jesus gives Simon a new name. In John 1.42 the name is Kefa, an Aramaic word meaning 'stone, rocky mass'. Here the original text uses the Greek form *Petros*, Peter, which in the NT is always and only used as a new name of Simon. It is thus a play on words: (Peter (Kefa) and rock (kefa) denote the same person. In our translation, the words 'su di te' ('on you') make this connection explicit—something which is not always clear in other translations of the type: 'You are Peter and on this rock . . .'. Another possible translation is: 'You are Peter, rock on which . . .'"

In order to underline the important distinction between biblical exegesis on the one hand, and later confessional interpretation on the other hand, the following explanation was added:

"Today the churches do not agree on the explanation of the text. There is, however, a consensus on the following biblical data: 1. The promise is made to Simon when he receives the Father's revelation (16.17), not when he acts instinctively (16.23). 2. All the apostles, including Simon, are called 'foundations' of the church (Eph 2.20; Rev 21.14). 3. Peter is not the 'cornerstone': only Christ is that (Mt 21.42; Mk 12.10; Lk 20.17; Acts 4.1; 1 Pet 2.7)."

This is the committee's calm and considered view.