

13. Omissions

Though a weakness in the translation, the omissions actually made it easier to read and understand. In this case I had asked the translator to concentrate on the main sense, so he felt free to omit difficult details, such as "I was comforted" in "I was comforted on meeting an old man." There is a tendency for all translators to omit details which are difficult, or which are not understood.

CONCLUSION

We do not expect a European to do good translation just because he knows two languages. He needs to have facility in literary expression in the target language, sensitivity to the reading ability of his readers, and training and practice in the techniques of semantic and grammatical adjustment. Many national workers have the ability to do good translation, but they should be given adequate training, and have their work checked thoroughly in the early stages, so that they can receive correction and guidance in problem areas. Without this help their potential is not likely to be realized, and they will probably become frustrated by the difficulties, or merely retreat into transliteration and literalisms.

In this particular case this national had considerable natural ability, but had he wished to become a translator he would have benefited from special guidance in the areas of usage of current language, amplification, and discourse flow.

DONALD S. DEER

NOTES ON THE TRANSLATION OF REVELATION, CHAPTER 22, INTO KITUBA

The Rev. Donald S. Deer is a translator of the Kituba language in Zaïre and is presently pursuing further studies at the University of Strasbourg, France.

Only one chapter remains to be done of our translation of the New Testament: chapter 22 of Revelation. I am in my office, reading through the Greek and comparing it with a new French translation called *Français Courant*, which helps us more than any other version as we translate into Kituba.

22:1 In the first verse of chapter 22 the Greek simply says: "He showed me the river." It does not say who "he" is. We know, however, from the 9th verse of the previous chapter that it is the angel. As a matter of fact, this French translation (the French equivalent of *Today's English Version*) spells this out and says: "The angel also showed me the river of the water of life." There is a difference, however, between *Today's English Version* and the *Français Courant* in the treatment of the problem of tense in this verse. TEV says that the river "comes from the throne of God and of the Lamb", whereas

the French says that the river “*came* from the throne of God and of the Lamb”. The present participle used in Greek can legitimately be translated either way; it is a matter of interpretation. For that matter, so is the punctuation. At the end of the first verse the Bible Society Greek text puts a full-stop. So we read: “The angel also showed me the river of the water of life, sparkling like crystal¹, which comes from the throne² of God and of the Lamb.”

22:2 If we put a full-stop there, we would go on to translate, in verse 2: “In the middle of the city’s street, and on each side of the river, was the tree of life”, but TEV and the parallel version in FC take this phrase “in the middle of the city’s street” as the continuation of what we read in the first verse. And so we read that the river “flows down the middle of the city’s street. On each side of the river was the tree of life . . .”. The question of course can be legitimately raised as to how one tree could be on two sides of a river at the same time. Turner, in his commentary on Revelation in the revised *Peake’s Commentary*, says that “the tree of life” is a generic singular, actually meaning “trees”; not the single tree of life, as in Eden, but many trees, as in Ezek. 47:7. In the same vein, Martin Rist, in his commentary on Revelation in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, says that the expression “the tree of life” was apparently used collectively to include a number of trees. Martin Kiddle, in his commentary on Revelation in the *Moffatt Commentary* series, says that the trees in the New Jerusalem are all of one kind—“the tree of life”. R. H. Charles, in his commentary on Revelation in the *International Critical Commentary* series, also says that this expression is used here collectively. *The New English Bible* gets round the problem by saying that on either side of the river stood “a tree of life”. Similarly, Beck has “on each side of the river is a tree of life”. Of course something like this solution had already been worked out by the *Twentieth Century New Testament*, published in 1904. In that translation we read: “on each side of the river was a tree of life”. But *The Jerusalem Bible* comes right out and says “on either side of the river were the trees of life”. (We might well ask, however, if we ought to imply that there was a large number of trees on each side of the river.) Among French translations, we have “a tree of life” in Maredsous and the new œcumenical translation of the Bible, and “trees of life” in the Jerusalem Bible.

The next problem we come across is the word “twelve” in verse 2. The “tree of life” or “trees of life bear twelve fruits”, says the Greek, if we translate it literally. As the standard grammar of the Greek of the New Testament by Blass-Debrunner indicates, however, the following clause “bearing its fruit once a month” makes it clear that the twelve in this verse is to be understood as “twelve times”. Hence the translation in the TEV: “the tree of life bears fruit twelve times a year, once every month”.³

¹ When we finished translating, I noted some of the more interesting solutions to translation problems that I did not mention in my preparation or did not anticipate. Since “crystal” is unknown, we borrow the French word “cristal”, but use it with a marker, *ditadi* (= “stone”), to indicate what sort of a thing it is.

² We translated “throne” by “chair of kingship”.

³ Note that when we came to translate “are for the healing of the nations”, we found it necessary to render this in Kituba by “heals the *people* of all nations”.

22:3 The beginning of the third verse is translated very literally in the King James Version: "and there shall be no more curse". Arndt and Gingrich tell us that this word, which occurs only once in the entire New Testament (just in this verse), means "that which is devoted" or "given over" to a deity, i.e. under a curse, hence "accursed thing". Since it is clear that the curse is God's curse, TEV brings this out by translating: "nothing that is under God's curse⁴ will be found in the city".

The end of verse 3, which is a fresh start and is therefore treated as a new paragraph in TEV, presents another problem, because it says that "the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and *his* servants⁵ [literally "slaves"] will worship *him*". To whom do "his" and "him" refer—to God, or to the Lamb? We had the same problem in 20:6, where we came across the phrase "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they will rule with *him* for a thousand years". Did that refer to God or to Christ, we wondered. There we came to the conclusion that the "him" referred to was Christ. The *Français Courant* version spells out the pronoun in 22:3 by saying that "the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and *God's* servants will worship him".

22:4 Where the Greek has "his name on their foreheads", and the TEV has "his name will be written on their foreheads", we have "they will write his name on their foreheads", the "they" not referring to the same people as "their" does.

22:5 Where the RSV has "they need no . . .", we translate, with TEV, "they will not need . . .", since the rest of the verbs in the sentence are in the future.

In translating "they will rule" in Kituba, we were faced with a choice between two different future tenses; because it was followed by the expression "for ever and ever" we chose the one indicating habitual aspect.

22:6 In verse 6 we read in the KJV the expression "the Lord God of the holy prophets". In the RSV we read "the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets". This is one of the many cases in which the RSV translation is different from that of the KJV because it is based on better Greek manuscripts than was the KJV. But the expression as we find it in the better manuscripts certainly is a strange one. How can we translate it? Once again we turn to the *Twentieth Century New Testament* for guidance; we find that it is translated "the Lord, the God that inspires the prophets". Knox picked up this cue when he translated "the Lord God who inspires his prophets". Phillips followed suit with "the Lord God who inspired the prophets". *The New English Bible* and *the French Jerusalem Bible* have "the Lord God who inspires the prophets". On the other hand *The (English) Jerusalem Bible* has "the Lord God who gives the spirit to the prophets". Going even further, TEV and the French version parallel to it translate: "the Lord God, who gives his Spirit to the prophets". We may well ask what the basis for this interpretation is. Note that Charles says that the "spirits" are best taken with Swete to be the prophets' own spirits, filled by the one spirit mentioned in 2:7, 14:13 and

⁴ In Kituba this came out "nothing that God cursed", since there is a verb "to curse" but no noun "curse".

⁵ Likewise, since there is no noun "servants", we translated this as "those people who serve God".

22:17. In like vein Turner concludes that the expression “‘spirits of the prophets’ probably [refers to] the prophet’s own spirit, inspired by the Spirit of God, as in 1 C. 14:32”. The question needs to be raised, however, whether this kind of interpretation and translation is justified, or whether it is not harmonization used to cover up the difficulty. The translation given here by the *Twentieth Century New Testament* and the *New English Bible*, in any case, are not open to this particular objection.⁶

22:7 So far, the angel has been speaking. But the words “Behold, I am coming soon” in verse 7 do not seem to be appropriate in the mouth of the angel. This is not the first time that we have encountered this expression “I am coming soon”. We came across it also in 16:15, and there we supplied, as we do here, the words “Jesus says”. The same problem will occur again in 22:12, where Jesus’ words interrupt the angel’s speech.⁷

22:8 Where we would say “I have heard and seen these things”, Kituba has “I have heard these things and seen them”.

22:9 (a) “Don’t do it!” had to be made more explicit in Kituba: “No, don’t worship me!”

(b) This is immediately followed in Kituba by “(But) worship God!”, from the end of the verse.

(c) And the “I am a fellow servant of yours, and of your brothers the prophets and of *all* those who obey the words in this book” of TEV comes out “we (you and I) all and you (singular) and brothers of you that are prophets of God, and people those all who obey the words that are in book this, we all serve Lord one”, in Kituba.

22:10 If we compare verse 10 in the RSV and TEV we see how different a literal translation can sound from a more dynamic translation. RSV reads: “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book”, but TEV says: “Do not keep the prophetic words of this book a secret”. We find the reason for this difference in the Arndt and Gingrich dictionary. The word in Greek is *sphragizō*, which means literally “to provide with a seal” or “to seal”. But as the dictionary indicates, there is also a figurative meaning, which is “to seal up something” in order to keep it secret. This is the meaning of this verb here and also in Rev. 10:4.

22:11 What do you do when there is no single word for “holy” in the language? Our translation in Kituba: “person of God”, since “holy” means “reserved for, belonging to God”.

22:13 In translating “the first and last” in Kituba, we had to ask the question: the first and last what? Since a person is speaking, we translated “first person” and “last person”.

⁶ The “trustworthy” of the RSV or the “can be trusted” of the TEV came out “you can put heart in them” in Kituba. Where RSV translated “what must soon take place” and TEV “what must happen very soon”, the Kituba has “things that will fall remains a-little”.

⁷ Where RSV has “Blessed is . . .” and TEV “Happy are . . .”, we have “Happiness with . . .” in Kituba, since nouns replace adjectives in this language.

Since prophets are the spokesmen for God, prophecy is the proclamation of God’s message, and “the prophetic words” of this verse are “the words of God” in Kituba.

22:14 Not all the Greek manuscripts read the same at verse 14. Reflection of this is seen in the differences between the KJV: "Blessed are they that do his commandments" and the RSV: "Blessed are those who wash their robes". This sounds quite different in the two versions in English. But if we listen to the sound of the different readings in Greek, there is more resemblance. The earliest manuscripts, the best manuscripts, read *hoi plunontes*—"washing", whereas the later and less reliable ones, on which the KJV is based, read *hoi poiountes*—"doing". And the earliest manuscripts read *tas stolas*—"robes", while the later ones read *tas entolas*—"commandments". The different readings do not rhyme or sound alike in English, but they do in Greek.

The solutions to translation problems are not always clear-cut. If we translate the Greek literally, we have "blessed those washing the robes of-them in-order-that will-be the right of-them over the tree of life and through-the gates they-might-enter into the city". You will notice that we have a conjunction *hina* followed by two verbs: the first one "will-be" and the second "they-might-enter", the first being a future indicative and the second what in Greek is called an aorist subjunctive. The conjunction *hina* means "in-order-that"—but that is not the only meaning of this word. The Blass-Debrunner grammar says that both in this verse and in 14:13 the conjunction means "because", and as a matter of fact TEV did translate it by "for"* in 14:13. It takes a slightly different direction in this verse, however, and translates: "and so have the right to eat the fruit from the tree of life, and to go through the gates into the city". The translation "for" is given both in 14:13 and in 22:14 by Phillips. The conjunction is not translated at all in the NEB in 22:14; a new sentence is started here: "They will have the right to the tree of life and will enter by the gates of the city". *The Jerusalem Bible* in French does not translate the conjunction either, but simply starts up again after a semicolon.

22:15 Since there is no verb supplied with the expression "outside (the city)", we were obliged to supply one; we inserted "will be"—the solution of the Twentieth Century New Testament, Goodspeed and Phillips.

We might well wonder how "dogs" got into the list in verse 15. Looking up the word in the Arndt and Gingrich dictionary we see that in this verse, as in Phil. 3:2, we have a figurative, not a literal, use of the word. As the article on "Dog" in the *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* indicates, the allusion is to workers of evil. Kiddle says that the author means "contemptible, abhorrent creatures, probably those addicted to unnatural vices". Note the parallel between this verse and 21:8. The TEV translates two different words, the one found in 21:8 and the other in 22:15—the words translated respectively "the polluted" and "the dogs" in RSV—by the same term: "the perverts". As Charles says in his commentary, "we may reasonably infer with Swete that 'the dogs' of the verse before us denote the same persons as 'the polluted' in 21:8".

22:16 "The root" that we have in Rev. 22:16 is not literally a root, but as Arndt and Gingrich tell us, it follows the Hebrew "shoot" or "scion" growing from the root, symbolically, the scion being, as our English dictionary tells us,

* TEV³ has "because".

“a descendant”, or “a child”—hence the translation in TEV: “I am the descendant from the family of David”, rather than “the root”.

Now that we have reached the last six verses of the Book of Revelation, I should mention in passing that the Greek text I have before me is quite different from that used by the translators of the KJV, for a very special reason. As Bruce Metzger points out, when Erasmus was publishing his Greek New Testament he had but one manuscript, dating from the twelfth century, for the Book of Revelation, which he had borrowed from his friend Reuchlin. It so happened that this manuscript lacked the final leaf with the last six verses of the book thereon. Erasmus therefore without hesitating took the Latin Vulgate and translated the Latin back into Greek. One must admire his ingenuity, but as might be expected from such a procedure, there arose readings in Erasmus' self-made text that have never been found in any known Greek manuscript. Erasmus' text, however, was to serve as the basis for printed texts for many years, and it was this text that was perpetuated in the so-called *Textus Receptus*, on which the KJV was based. What made me think of this was that where in verse 16 Jesus says “I am . . . the bright morning star”, the word for “morning” in the Greek text published by the Bible Society is *prōinos*. Erasmus, however, had used *orthinos*—the word we find in Luke 24:22. Yet this word has not been found in any known Greek manuscript of Rev. 22:16⁸.

22:17 In this verse “the Spirit and the Bride say ‘Come!’”. The question arises: “What Spirit?” Charles answers that this clearly means the Spirit of Christ. He goes on to say that this is the case not only in this verse, but also in 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22 and 14:13. Brüttsch, on 2:7, quotes Schweizer to the effect that this Spirit is none other than the glorified Christ himself. Turner says it is probably the Spirit of Christ speaking through the author. Kiddle, on the other hand, says that it is prophets that are meant by the Spirit. But Rist says that this is that divine manifestation which is different from, even though related to, Christ mentioned at the close of each of the seven letters in the Book of Revelation. As *The (French) Jerusalem Bible* indicates in its note, this request is addressed to Christ (cf. 22:20). As Rist says, the Spirit and the Bride call upon Christ to make his appearance. So we could not identify this Spirit with the Spirit of Christ; this is the Spirit of God. The necessity for spelling this out in Kituba is that translating simply “the Spirit” would be meaningless. We have to make explicit what we take to be implicit in this expression, namely, that this is the Spirit of God, which after all is the meaning of the Holy Spirit. George Johnston, in his article on “Spirit” in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, edited by Alan Richardson, refers to Kiddle's view that “the Spirit” refers here to an ecstatic response of the prophets in the Church. Johnston says that “it should be observed that for the writer these prophets are indeed *instruments* of the supernatural Spirit who dwells within the Christian community. Here we are in touch with notions very similar to those of the OT. The Spirit is the *God* who speaks in prophets.”

⁸ “The bright morning star” became “star that shines strongly (brightly) every morning” in Kituba.

In connection with the comment by Rist that "the Spirit and the Bride call upon Christ to make his appearance", I might add that in *Vocabulaire Biblique* Menoud says that the Spirit and the Church are united in the same expectant waiting for the coming of Christ. When he refers to the Church he of course means the Bride referred to in verse 17. The problem of the identification of the Bride is interesting from the point of view of interpretation, but is not a question that we have to deal with in our translation. That is one task that can be left for the interpreter later. We still simply translate "the Bride".⁹

22:18 In verse 18 the author, John, addresses a solemn warning to all who hear the prophetic words of this book. He identifies himself as the author by saying "I", but because of the number of people who have been speaking in the previous verses it seems appropriate to identify him as John, as he himself had done in verse 8 of the same chapter, and so TEV translates "I, John" here in verse 18.¹⁰

When in the same verse we have a reference to "the plagues described in this book" we encounter a problem with respect to our translation into Kituba that is not found in English. This is the identification of the agent of this passive verb. *Who* described the plagues in this book? It was obviously the author, John. And so on the working copy of the French translation from which we make our translation into Kituba I have reworded the French from "described in this book" to "that I have described in this book". That is the kind of shift that we have had to make so many times in the New Testament.

22:19 Here the expression "which are described in this book" presents the same problem, since most verbs in Kituba do not have a passive form, so in our translation the passive needs to be shifted to the active. Sometimes the commentaries help by explaining what agent is implied if not actually stated with the passive form, but in many cases the translator has to supply the information from his understanding of the text.

It is important to make sense when one translates, and that is why TEV, instead of translating "God will take away his share in the tree of life" in verse 19, has translated "God will take away from him his share of the fruit of the tree of life"; and this is the model that we shall be following in our translation in Kituba.

22:20 In some languages it is necessary to identify the speaker more often than in others, and so in verse 20, where we read that "he who gives his

⁹ Actually it came out "Woman that a man is marrying" in Kituba. Further notes on 22:17: (a) It would have been misleading to translate the word "hears" literally, as did the RSV; we followed the lead of the TEV and translated "person who hears/is hearing *that*" (applying to the immediately preceding "Come!"). (b) "Whoever is thirsty" comes out in Kituba: "Every person that is with hunger for water". (c) Kituba has taken over some French words in a form difficult to recognize; e.g. the French "offert" (offered). In Kituba it has taken on the meaning: offered freely, as a gift, and is spelt "ofele". This is the word we used to translate "without price/as a gift" in this verse.

¹⁰ Another loan word is found in our translation of this verse. When one says "Attention!" in French, it means "Watch out!" In Kituba, when one warns somebody about something, one "gives him *atasio*", which is of course the same French word that has crossed the linguistic boundary and is used in a different construction. So here we translated: "I, John, I am giving *atasio* to people all who . . .".

testimony to all this says, 'Certainly so! I am coming soon!'", it is more natural to make the shift in Kituba from the pronoun "he" to the name of the speaker, which can be known from verses 7 and 12. It would read in Kituba, then: "Jesus, who gives his testimony to all this"—or "who guarantees the truth of all these things"—"says, 'Yes! I am coming soon!'".¹¹ The identification of the speaker is specially important if the Greek word which is used in verses 18 and 20 is translated in the same way. Note the confusion that might arise, for instance, in reading Weymouth's translation, in verse 18: "I solemnly declare" and in verse 20: "he who solemnly declares". This is not the same person, though it would appear to be from this translation. In verse 18 it is the author who is speaking, and in verse 20, Jesus. Two more translations that present the same difficulty to the reader are Knox (verse 18: "I give this warning" and verse 20: "he who gives this warning"), and the Authentic New Testament, translated by Schonfield (verse 18: "I testify" and verse 20: "he who testifies").

22:21 The text of the Greek in verse 21 in the Bible Society edition before me reads, in literal translation: "The grace of the Lord Jesus with all". This is the reading based on what are considered to be the best manuscripts. Other readings (or wordings) of this expression: "The grace of the Lord Jesus" as given in the Bible Societies' Greek New Testament critical apparatus (a listing of all the variant readings) are "the grace of the Lord", "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ", "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ", "the grace of our Lord Jesus", and finally the omission of these words altogether in one Greek manuscript and in one ancient version.

But that is not the end of our confusion here, because as we continue in this verse we have, in the Bible Society text, the words "with all", but other readings are "with all of you", "with all of us", "with the saints", "with your (2nd pers. sing.) saints", "with all of the saints", "with all of his saints", "upon all the saints unto age of the ages".

Well, is that the end of the book, in one reading or another? No, because there are other possibilities presented by manuscripts which add either "Amen" or "Amen Amen". It is not an absolutely clear-cut issue. If it were, the editors would have indicated their certainty in the footnotes in the Bible Society edition by the use of the letter "A" for the degree of certainty. But in the case of the words "with all" and whether or not to include "Amen" or "Amen Amen" they have used the letter "C", which indicates a fair degree of uncertainty as to what is the correct reading.

All of this, then, gives a fair sample of the kind of problem we encounter in working through a chapter of the New Testament as we prepare to translate it into Kituba.

¹¹ It actually reads: "Jesus, person who shows that things those all must fall of truth, he says/is saying that 'Yes, remains a-little I am coming!'". Further re 22:20: (a) We often forget that "Amen" is a word that is not native to English. It is not really Greek either, but simply a transliteration that the Greek translators of the Old Testament used in place of translating the Hebrew word *amen*, which means "so let it be". Here we followed the lead of the TEV and translated "Let things those be thus!" (cf. "So be it" in the TEV). (b) One thing we must never forget in Bible translation is that the language into which we translate has its own word order, which must be respected, So "Come, Lord Jesus!" became "Lord Jesus, come!" in our translation in Kituba.

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