"accuser", "evil one", "tempter", and "enemy (of God)". In such cases it would be wise to use the qualifier also in conjunction with Satan.

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PAUL D. FUETER

THE THERAPEUTIC LANGUAGE OF THE BIBLE

The author recently retired from the post of UBS Distribution Consultant for the Europe region. This article is based on a paper presented to the UBS Europe Regional Translation Committee.

Introduction

When I sit in church and hear a preacher speaking about salvation, I remind myself that this word comes from the Latin *'salus'*, health, as the German *Heil* comes from *heilen* to heal. The Good News of salvation is a therapeutic message. The purpose of this article is to investigate the language of the Bible, and particularly of the gospels, to find out how the evangelists tried to heal the minds, hearts and bodies of their audiences.

To achieve this end, I will follow the book by Professor Paul Watzlawick *The Language of Change. Elements of therapeutic communication* (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1978) in which the father of modern communication theory explains the difference between the language of science or "diagnosis" and the language of healing. He calls the first "digital language" and the second "analogical language", the language of change.

1. The different characteristics of digital and analogical language

1.1. Definitions

Digital language is defined by Watzlawick and others as objective, cerebral, logical. It is the language of science, of digits, of numbers. It distinguishes between what the word means and what it does not mean, e.g. 2 is two and nothing else. It alone can negate, subordinate, analyse, hierarchize, explain, interpret. It follows the laws of linguistic logic: grammar, syntax and semantics.

Analogical language, on the other hand, cannot be defined, as it is not the language of definition. A word can have many meanings. People spoke to Jesus as "a God" as well as "a devil". It is the language of imagery, metaphors, *pars pro toto,* synthesis and totality. It uses the imperative and the indicative. It is the stuff of dreams, fantasies, and has its own rules.

We constantly use both these languages but each has its own function. We need digital language to interpret, describe, analyse and explain the information

we receive from our senses. But analogical language allows us to communicate what we feel intuitively, that is our religious, aesthetic, ethical and even logical insights. We then say: "It clicks".

1.2. The evolution of digital language in the western world

It is essential for us to recognise that we constantly use both languages and that we can only speak prose, like Molière's Monsieur Jourdain, or poetry. The world in which we live, in Europe at least, is sick because it is emphasising digital language and has degraded its religious symbols into clichés and stereotypes.

To illustrate this, I went to make a short excursion into the development of scientific language since the 17th century. Galileo, Descartes and Pascal were the pioneers of modern scientific thinking in Europe. They used digital (mathematical) language to describe natural phenomena, and "it worked". They could foretell events. With them and their successors, it was no longer possible to speak of reality without being asked: "Which reality do you mean: that of the creation, which is predictable, or that of the Creator which is not?" As a result of these discoveries, theologians had to look again at the truth of the biblical stories. Their first reaction was to identify biblical language with scientific language. Galileo's studies contradicted this interpretation; he was then condemned for heresy.

Today, we have learned to speak of God by means of symbolic or figurative language; we agree that we can only interpret our religious experiences subjectively. We recognize the difference between digital and analogical language and apply the former to literary and historical criticism. But we also agree that there is a discontinuity between the "I know" of the scientist and the "I believe" of the sons and daughters of God.

The difference between the language of science and the language of religion lies in the insight that the former allows us to categorise our perceptions and to describe the relation and hierarchy of the words we use. The lion is a carnivorous cat, a mammal, a vertebrate, an animal and not a plant. We need digital language to put order into our sense images, so that we "know where we are and what we are doing". Digital language analyses our attitudes and behaviour; the doctor uses it to diagnose our disease, but his verdict does not cure us. The other, which we call analogical, refuses to analyse and explain the meaning of events. It tells stories and creates pictures in the mind of the hearers, who then become conscious of unexpected relations between symbols, and discover a new way of looking at the world and themselves. It is the language of change, for it helps us to cross the frontiers of our personal, cultural, religious and ethical background. It liberates us from our irrational compulsive behaviour which can be the source of our diseases and unhappiness.

The language of diagnosis and that of change are both essential for the survival of the human race on the planet earth. The high development of digital language has enabled today's scientists to formulate the laws of nuclear physics and genetics which confront our societies with terrible choices. But our ancestors have survived centuries of famines, plagues, wars and natural disasters, not only by following their traditional knowledge of natural phenomena, but most of all by trusting their intuition. When western Christians interpret traditional

religions in theological and analytical language they speak of them as magical and prescientific. But I see in such value judgments a symptom of the way western society underrates analogical language. If the churches and societies in the so-called industrialised world are to change, we have to learn once more to use analogical language in Christian communication and in social interactions.

1.3. Characteristics of analogical language

Watzlawick proposes five characteristics of analogical language. They also characterize biblical style and rhetorics. I will try to summarize them as simply as possible:

1. *Condensations:* when words are consensed to create a new image which cannot be analysed digitally such as, for example: popollution or biodeplorable food. Most jokes and caricatures are condensations.
2. *Figurative language:* evocative speech, concrete imagery as used in parables, poetry, magical formulae. Note that figurative language is essentially positive (negations are essentially digital) and is considered as the most primitive form of expression (the miaow of the cat!)
3. *Pars pro toto:* where a part is described in such a way that it represents the totality (as in myths and ancestor stories) and where the personal adventure of Robinson Crusoe becomes everyone's experience. Don't we sometimes call a friend by his name as we only see his back?
4. *Aphorisms:* like "what has made the state into hell is that we want to make it into heaven", and specially "chiasms" such as "the first will be last and the last will be the first".
5. *Ambiguities, allusions, puns:* like "be a realist, demand the impossible".

In the next chapter, I shall try to discover how analogical language is the basis of the gospels' rhetorics of healing.

2. The rhetorics of healing in the gospel narrative

2.1. Blocking the analytical function of the mind

If digital language does not promote healing, hypertrophy of our analytical brain (the brain specialist's left hemisphere) will prevent change and renewal in our audience's attitudes and behaviour. Our emotional experiences are often spoilt by our awareness that "what I experience now is an emotional experience". This self-critical ability may help us to avoid excessive enthusiasm, but it can also prevent religious experience and liberation. Listening to a Beethoven symphony for the first time may elate and transform our attitudes; but once we have heard it a second time, we begin to discover recurrent themes. We then understand why we were thrilled, but we will never relive our first joy. Two thousand years ago, Jesus wanted his audiences to change their attitudes and behaviour. But the religious leaders were locking the door to the kingdom of heaven in people's faces and did not themselves go in (Mt 23.13). In psychologi-

cal terms, they interpreted the law of Moses in the jargon of the lawcourts. To counteract them and to "allow those who are trying to enter" to have access to new life, Jesus had to block the analytic function of his hearers' minds so that they could hear God's healing message. According to Watzlawick, three rhetorical devices can achieve this end. They can be illustrated by examples from the Gospels.

The first are *paradoxical injunctions,* that is, series of words which cannot be sorted out logically. Though they sound very practical, they confuse the hearer. The commandment: "love your neighbour as yourself" is a case in point. Love is "a positive feeling resulting in a behaviour towards an object or a person perceived by the subject". But the biblical injunction directs the attention of the lover not to another person or to an object, but to himself. Every pastor knows that this condensed paradox can liberate the religious do-gooder who is obsessed with helping others self-sacrificially. It draws his attention to himself, an action he has logically to reject. This confuses him, a first step towards his salvation.

An even more paradoxical injunction is "love God with all your mind, all your willpower, all your intelligence and all your strength" (Mk 12.30). How can I love a symbol representing what no human can perceive? This paradox has accompanied the people of Israel all through its history, and it could only interpret the object of this love as the Torah or as the Word of God. For the Christian church, the image of God is Christ, the Son of Man who lived 2000 years ago and whose death is described by the four evangelists. But to love the risen Christ is also puzzling to our mind.

Watzlawick calls the second way of blocking the analytical function of the mind *"the worst fantasy technique".* Most human anxieties are due to real fears, fears of getting sick, of dying, of losing jobs or income. We normally deal with our friends' anguish by means of positive images of the future. We cheer them up, belittling the risks or even evaluating their percentage chance of recovery. But this does not heal them.

The "worst fantasy technique" consists in not talking about real fears (e.g. of dying) but of imagining the most disastrous and unlikely consequences the problem could lead to. Once people are exonerated from considering what is real, possible and reasonable, they usually find it easier to envisage what the real and possible outcome of their predicament might be. Worst fantasies may challenge our image of a heartless God. I suggest that Jesus uses the image of Gehenna and "outer darkness", not to frighten his audience, but to confuse their intellectual and nationalistic interpretation of God's covenant with Israel. When he heals the Roman officer's slave (Mt 8.5-13), he wants his Jewish hearers to have the same faith as "this true Son of Abraham", but they will only do so if they realize that their excluding all non-Jews from God's love leads to nonsense. Jesus speaks of the fire in which Lazarus' benefactor suffers from thirst in order to challenge the Pharisees to read the Scriptures and listen to what Moses has to say about justice and heartlessness.

The third way of blocking out sickening analytical games is by dealing with the symptoms of the disease itself: *"prescribing or displacing the symptoms".*

When Luther told Melanchthon *pecca fortiter* (sin boldly) he was acting therapeutically. When Jesus told the teachers of the law: "Show me the coin for

paying the tax" (Mt 22.19), he also forced them to hold the image of the divine emperor in their hands, an act they themselves condemned. He encouraged them to transgress the very law they would have quoted if he had said "yes, you have to pay the tax". By using the unholy coin for buying bread, they were anyhow recognizing the pagan Roman Empire. The injunction "pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay God what belongs to God" (Mt 22.21) was indeed a liberating word, if only his confused opponents had listened to and accepted his healing word.

In the story of the woman caught in adultery, we can recognize a similar procedure. By inviting the accusers to take a stone into their hands and to kill the woman, Jesus prescribes the symptom. By adding a condition to the act, he displaces the symptom from the woman's sin to the sinfulness of man. Confusion blocked their will to act and, maybe, opened the door to renewal for their salvation.

2.2. Healing the confused seeker

Blocking the digital computer in our brains can only be a first step towards the faith which saves. According to Watzlawick, three additional rhetorical devices will help the audiences towards new life. The first consist in enabling them *to reframe their world image* and to experience a radical change of mind, a *metanoia*. Jesus' imperative "pay the Emperor what belongs to him . . ." does just that. It allows his opponents to see the emperor as pseudo-divine, and God as the Lord of the Universe.

When Jesus in the presence of Simon the Pharisee's guests said to the sinful woman who came to wash his feet, "your sins are forgiven" (Lk 7.36-50), he was inviting them to change their view of God's attitude to women, to adultery and to himself as a prophet. The fact that he had not reacted negatively to her touching his feet had already puzzled Simon. The paradox that this "bad woman" could love Jesus, and be more hospitable then he had been, confused Simon utterly. But that this so-called prophet could claim to absolve a great sinner was contradicting his own and his guests' mental structures and world image: "Only God can forgive sin, but he is in heaven and we are here, in Simon's house".

We do not know if the guests did change their mind, but the woman must have reframed his own image of God and the world: *Metanoia* is the first part of her being healed. Her second experience was to hear a *behaviour prescription*. Jesus said to the woman "Go in peace, your faith has healed you". This key sentence is indeed analogical and injunctive language, a personal imperative to clinch the woman's insight that Jesus is not like the other guests; he is even more than a prophet or a priest. His intervention has changed her life, and now she is invited to "go". This story, like many other gospel narratives, ends with a behaviour prescription (see the end of the parable of the good Samaritan). We do not have to know what happened to this woman, nor indeed who she was, but we should give great importance to the formal structure of such liberating imperatives. The expression "Go in peace" has other connotations in Greek than in English, as *poreuou eis eirēnēn* is very dynamic, it means "go on your way towards the peace I give you".

A behaviour prescription is a command, one of man's most archaic language forms. It seems that willing a certain outcome does not necessary mean that one wills (is aware of) all the consequences following from that act of will. Some of the effects of one's obedience to a command are unexpected. Thus, a command to do something (go in peace, go and do likewise, follow me, etc.) has the potential of analogically conveying to the hearer the immediate experience and realisation of certain aspects of reality which cannot be communicated by means of digital description or explanations.

But after healing, what next? No therapy will be considered to have been successful unless the person who has obeyed the behaviour prescription follows a new way of life. This can apply to the drug addict as well as to the theologian who discovers that analogical language liberates him from the dryness of his scholarship. Watzlawick calls the next necessary step in therapy *therapeutic rituals.*

The function of ritual is to consolidate the new world view so that new life becomes possible in the long term. We all know the effect of emotional enthusiasm which lasts only a few days. We need repetitive behaviour which will consolidate the new attitudes. At the same time, we have to beware: this development often prevents the religious person from becoming fully human. Thus words like salvation and rituals like baptism and communion can become stereotypes and lose their healing and nurturing effect.

The gospels seem to be aware of the role of ritual for life in the kingdom of God, but they do not present us with models for the churches to follow. They tell us that Jesus participated in the Sabbeth worship in synagogues, in the Jewish festivals in the temple.

But we don't know what he thought about it all; the evangelists use his visits to Jerusalem to mark the place and time of the stories relating to his healing ministry. We know only that Jesus taught his disciples to pray a short prayer, and that he ate some sort of ritual supper the night before he was betrayed.

But the gospels are bringing together the building stones of the early churches' rituals. The Beatitudes, the parables with their situational context, the healing narratives, the grouped sayings are all part of the treasure trove from which Christian believers, all over the world, have constructed their own liturgies. In doing this, I believe that they truly represented the wish of their master. For he did not, I think, want to develop a formal system of ritual actions, but expected his followers to invent their own therapeutic rituals under the guidance of the Holy Spirit whose power had healed them.

For the disciples, Jesus' own example must have been crucial. He was a faithful Jew and did not openly challenge the temple or synagogue worship. But he re-interpreted the liturgical action of the priests and teachers of the law so extensively that theologians still discuss whether there is continuity or discontinuity between circumcision and Christian baptism, or between the temple sacrifices and the Eucharist.

I believe that Jesus expected that his disciples would spontaneously invent new liturgies which would re-interpret elements of the Jewish way of reading the Old Testament, adding to them some revolutionary insights from their post-resurrection experience and from the non-Jewish cultures. Jesus' attitude to his own tradition, and his openness to the Samaritans and non-Jews, would justify

Peter's innovation when he baptized Cornelius. It is also worth noting that the disciples' sharing in fellowship meals and prayers after Pentecost (Acts 2.42) later became the Lord's supper celebrated according to a pattern the Apostle Paul received from the Lord (1 Cor 11.23-25).

But when it comes to sharing the new rituals resulting from the liberating Christian experience, one fact constantly emerges; the role of material objects in consolidating new behaviour through common worship. All religious rituals include the handling of "sacred objects" which play an essential part in therapy, from the analogical amulet to the chemical pills which in many cases work analogically. This is already clearly shown in the role of the Scriptures and the sacraments in the early church.

The healing sequence of *reframing, behaviour prescription* and *rituals* may be a modern rediscovery. It is as old as the world, and is exemplified by the evangelists. It is with this in mind that I want to examine one chapter of the Sermon on the Mount and illustrate how it works in practice.

3. Contrasting analogical and digital language in Matthew chapter 5

As we have seen, therapeutic language often starts by confusing the analytical brain by means of paradoxical injunctions, worst fantasy techniques and prescribing (or displacing) the symptoms. It also encourages reframing the listener's world-view, prescribes behaviour and develops rituals. I will try to demonstrate the way the Sermon on the Mount contrasts analogical and digital language so that it leads the reader towards new life.

3.1 Matthew 5.1-16. The Beatitudes, the salt and light for the world

The first of these two pericopes starts with eight positive statements for undefined audiences. "Happy are those who . . .". The first and the last promise the kingdom of heaven to those who are spiritually poor and to those who are persecuted. The other six use passive verbs to describe the reward for different attitudes. This first discourse is an offer to all those who long for ultimate reality and challenges the hearers to go beyond their humdrum life by pointing to images of a full life. The aim of these short sentences is to arouse the hope in their hearts. They evoke paradoxical pictures of a kingdom for the poor, an inheritance for the humble and a vision of God for the pure in heart.

After these words addressed to the milling crowds and to the sitting disciples, Jesus speaks to his followers: "Happy are you when people . . . persecute you . . . This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted". The paradox has become explicit: to rejoice when one is rejected by one's society does not make sense. These injunctions relate the disciples to the ugly times of the Old Testament where the meek and the just were discriminated against. Verses 11 and 12 are an essential part of Jesus' discourse and should never be cut off the reading because they "don't fit". On the contrary, they are the antidote to the pious *Schwärmerei* which so often tempts us. There is a cruel reality as well as the joy of salvation, and the reference to the prophets challenges the disciples to see themselves as part of the whole family of witnesses who are with God.

Verses 13 to 16 of Matthew 5 start with two paradoxical images of the disciples: they are the salt of the earth and light for the world. Their suffering and

persecution will be for a purpose. But these sayings confuse our logical minds, and I believe this is the aim of the text. To explain them (as is done in many sermons) is counter-productive, for the puzzle should enable us to think afresh about our own relation to those around us. When the Good News Bible translates: "You are like salt for all mankind", or the Gute Nachricht: "Was Salz für die Nahrung ist, das seid ihr für die Menschen" (what salt is to food, you are to people), they appeal to the readers' minds so that they think they understand, and take away the intended impact.

The puzzled hearer should rather reflect on the three negative observations that follow the imagery: "The spoiled salt cannot be made salty again", "the city on the hill cannot be hidden", and "no one puts a lamp under a bucket". This is analytical language which helps the disciples to take the previous images seriously and prepares them for the last behaviour prescription: "Let your light shine before all humans so that they see your good works". And his behaviour has a purpose: "That the onlookers should praise God!" This first part of the Sermon on the Mount speaks to the people and to the disciples. It invites all to listen, but makes it clear that Jesus' followers have a particular task to accomplish. In the next section, Jesus will tackle the issue of the law of Moses.

3.2. Matthew 5.17-42. The teaching about the law

This section summarises Jesus' teaching about the law of Moses as it applies to anger, adultery, divorce, vows and revenge. It starts with a negative imperative: "Do not think I have come to do away with the law . . ." This is digital language and appeals to the left part of the brain which is the seat of language and logic. Jesus now answers the question that must have been in his hearers' minds after his words about the people praising God after seeing the disciples' good works: "If seeing good works is enough, why bother about the many commands of Moses?" To do this he starts by describing his objectives as "giving the Torah its real meaning". Before stating his own understanding of the universal taboos embedded in the ten commandments: "no murder, no adultery, no false oaths", he acknowledges the divine roots of these prohibitions, and says, in the same breath, that they are not eternal but linked with the existence of the cosmos. He then adds conditional remarks: "Whosoever disobeys the least of these commandments and teaches others to do so [as we all have done] will be the least in the kingdom!", and "if you are not more faithful then the teachers of the law . . . you won't enter the kingdom of heaven".

These are puzzling statements for the disciples, who considered that the Pharisees were obeying nearly all the law's commands at great cost. How could simple and poor fishermen achieve such perfection? The dilemma can be described analytically: "We all disobey the law and teach others to do so by our example; we therefore are the least in the kingdom! But we cannot emulate the Pharisees, we therefore can't even enter the kingdom! Where are we?" This is a sickening contradiction, or, maybe, out of this very confusion, a healing way of looking at the "law of Moses" will emerge. This is what Jesus hopes his disciples will discover.

To make clear what he means by the law, Jesus continues blocking the analytic function of his hearers' mind and describes very common behaviour, linking it

with *paradoxical injunctions* such as: "If you offer a gift to God at the altar and remember your brother's resentment, leave the altar . . .", or "if you commit adultery with your eye, get rid of it!". To leave the temple without accomplishing one's religious duties is a crime of "lèse-majesté", and how can one multilate one's body without committing even a greater sin?

Jesus also uses the *worst fantasy technique* when he says that if a disciple calls his brother a worthless fool, he deserves to go "to the fire of hell", or that to keep one's adulterous eye will result in the whole body ending up in hell.

When Jesus speaks about divorce, Jesus teaches his disciples to disregard the law allowing the Jews to divorce their wives because they don't like something about her (Deut 24.1-4). This baffles my logical mind. Is Jesus to be seen as the least in God's kingdom (Mt 5.19)? More amazing still, the man who divorces his wife is not condemned as are the persons who get angry or commit adultery. Jesus' argument against divorce is that his wife and her next husband would become adulterous. It seems to me that Jesus replaces our constant preoccupation with the ten commandments with a series of puzzling images, and links normal human situations with the kingdom of God.

Finally in the passage about revenge, we find a series of imperatives which *prescribe and displace symptoms* or moral disease. Jesus tells the disciples to turn the other cheeck, to go an extra mile, to give to those who ask. But in this text, it is not the person who we think needs help who is given a healing injunction; it is the oppressed and suffering disciple who becomes the healer. For the villager who is summoned by a Roman soldier to carry his gear for a mile is asked to go an extra mile in order to make his oppressor conscious of their common humanity. Turn the other cheek once, and maybe your adversary will see his foolishness and change his way of life. The disciples are not called to cure themselves, but to care for those who are in need of life.

To read this section of the Sermon on the Mount from the point of view of therapeutic rhetorics should deliver us from attempts to explain Jesus' discourse by means of casuistics. It should stimulate us to recognize how confused we are when we meditate these words, and to allow our intuition to tell us that for Jesus, the law had become the good news that we can be delivered from our analytical fixations.

3.3. Matthew 5.43-47. Love for enemies

The last pericope of Matthew 5 shows how Jesus tried to help his audience to discover a new world view. He starts by taking one of the basic tenets of human socialisation seriously: we can only know who we are by recognizing the difference between our friends and our enemies. Human groups reinforce this knowledge by prescribing radically different attitudes towards neighbours who are ready to share what they have with us, and enemies who are competing for what belongs to our group. But Jesus contradicts this universally accepted reality in order to help those who are confused by his previous statements. They are invited to *reframe their world view.*

The behaviour prescription "Love your enemies" is a direct imperative. It challenges those who read it to look at their enemies in a new way, from a completely different point of view. They are asked to experience a different

feeling from the "natural reaction" expected from them by society when meeting strangers. And the behaviour is not unknown to them; it is loving them as they already love their friends.

Jesus immediately adds a second behaviour prescription: "Pray for those who persecute you!" The enemies we are to love are not some mythical and impersonal group, but people we meet, see and hear, and who hurt us deliberately. This goes against the grain. It is very different from what we have learned from our parents and our national leaders! So Jesus uses an argument which we can only understand analogically: "This is the way to become sons and daughters of your Father in heaven!" One more call for us to reframe our self image: God wants to enter into a very close relationship with us. Here, even our theological understanding seems to be challenged: there is no mention of our faith responding to his forgiveness.

The next verse clinches the argument: "God loves all, whether wicked or good. He causes rain and sunshine to feed and give light to everyone". The disciples' behaviour will not just be more of the pagans' good deeds; they love their brothers as a matter of course. It is not to be measured according to the scales used by sociologists, psychologists and moralists. The model for the new behaviour is not to be like the best humans, but to be perfect like God who is perfect. To compare our behaviour to God's is really "new". The Torah gave detailed ordinances for daily behaviour. It was not, in its form, very different from the customary laws and religious guidelines of the Canaanites living in Palestine. The content of the law was very different, but the language was analytical.

The question now is: "How can God's perfection become a model for humans who, by definition, cannot observe his behaviour? The readers of the gospel are invited to recognize in Jesus' love towards his enemies, and prayer for those who persecuted him the criteria for their own attitudes and actions. In other words, Jesus does not make the law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets come true by means of digital (analytical) language, like the Pharisees and teachers of the law. He communicates his healing news by figurative language, by his gestures, his actions, his total behaviour. His words interpret what he does, and reveal his own attitudes to God and to those who meet him. He alone is perfect as our Father in heaven alone is perfect. The way of life is the scale for measuring our own way of life.

Jesus' words about the law do not stop with chapter 5. He now continues by speaking of the right way or worshipping God. You recognize here Watzlawick's insight that rituals are essential for the healed and liberated disciples to remain so. The shift from the sublime of God's perfection to the picture of us blowing trumpets when giving alms is not ridiculous. It helps us to find out how to relate to our Father who is in heaven as long as we live, seeking his kingdom and the kind of righteousness God requires of his sons and daughers.

Conclusion

In the preface to his study, Watzlawick says: "The thesis of this book is simple; its practical application is not". I have tried to apply the thesis to the gospels, but Bible translators and communicators may find it hard to practise it. Our way of transposing the original text into the language and culture of today consists

mainly in making its meaning explicit by introducing some analytical language into the message we want to transmit. But our technique may mar the Bible's analogical language and make it less therapeutic. Once we recognize that our explanations appeal to the left part of our readers' brains whilst the evangelists wanted their audiences to change, rather than to know, we have to ask ourselves whether our transpositions are dynamic and equivalent enough. I believe that we should revise the Good News Bibles to make them more dynamic and more equivalent, to give them a better chance to let the language of change speak.

I am often asked: "Why do you think the Bible is so important?" My first answer so far has been: "Because of the experience of many generations of Jews and Christians, that it works for their good!" But I may now add a less pragmatic remark: "Because it is for the healing of the nations".

RAIJA SOLLAMO

THE SOURCE TEXT FOR THE TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT[1]

The author is a member of the Finnish Bible Translation Committee and a specialist in the Septuagint.

The Finnish Committee for Bible Translation started its work in 1973, and produced an Interim Report in 1975. This article, which is partly based on this report, describes the principles followed by the Finnish committee in assessing the value of the standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament, known as the Masoretic Text (MT). It also illustrates these principles, with special reference to the Book of Joshua, with which the committee was concerned at the time this article was written.

There are two textual difficulties which often affect the Old Testament much more than the New.

The first is the length of time which separates the original writing of the Old Testament from the final Masoretic Text. At its greatest, this period extends to about two thousand years. In spite of this, we have for most of the Old Testament only one text form, namely MT. Besides MT, we can only make use of translations, which seem to be based on a text form partially diverging from MT.

The second difficulty is that the language of the Old Testament is no longer perfectly known; for instance, the meaning of many uncommon words remains obscure. There are in MT many places which are extremely problematical to translate, either because our philological knowledge is unsatisfactory or because the texts as it stands is unintelligible, supposedly because of one or more mistakes made during repeated copying. Two examples may be quoted among others.

Gen 4.8 wayyō'mer qayin 'el-hebel 'āḥīw / wayyᵉhī bihyōtām baśśādeh "and Cain said to Abel his brother/ and it happened, when they were in the field . . ."

Suggested correction: / add with Sam LXX Pesh Vulg *nēlᵉkā baśśādeh* "let us go to the field", cf. Targ JJII. The Finnish translation adds Cain's words to Abel,

[1] This article is a revised version of a paper read at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in March 1985.