

LET'S TRANSLATE THE SCRIPTURE FROM THE BEST SOURCES

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Introduction

Postcolonial criticism and courtesy both require authors to introduce themselves to their audience. The present author is a UBS Translation Consultant, from Democratic Republic of Congo, black, male, Roman Catholic, middle class, theologian, biblical student, teacher, husband, and father. These details might help the reader to understand better the background, insights, and limitations of this article. The United Bible Societies is a movement whose roots go back to 1804 and whose major activity consists of translating and distributing the Scripture. In 1968, UBS and the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity signed a document, revised in 1987 as “Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible.” In 1993, the UBS Executive Committee “discussed ‘UBS Relations with the Orthodox Churches and Translation Projects’ and adopted a resolution (93.27) which allowed for the use of the Church text as the base text for translations under specific circumstances” (UBS Global Board 2004). UBS has thus built up an international reputation for its scholarly and interconfessional commitments and contributions. This is both an honour and a challenge! An educated reader expects UBS to keep up the standard it has set for itself in providing more Scripture and related materials whose contents are both scholarly and interconfessional, even when these contents are presented in common language.

Combining scholarship and interconfessionality is a high and commendable standard. But it is not easy and there is always the temptation of giving up or “adapting,” especially if the adaptation suits narrow economical and missionary reasons. I would argue that *it is more economical to think and act consistently, in season and out of season*. I use the word “economical” (and its noun form “economy”) to refer not to something cheap, but rather in the sense which it bears in the frameworks of business ethics and of systematic theology. In business ethics, an economy means an asset that can bring benefits in short, medium, and long terms (for example, education, land, people, services). In systematic theology, the expression “economy of God” is used first for God’s internal being as the one triune God, but also for God’s external manifestation through the mysteries of creation, incarnation, resurrection, church, sacraments, ethics, pastoral care or governance, and many others. The internal being of God

and his external manifestation are the two poles of what is also known as the economy of salvation. Even if this study will expand more on a technical sense of “economical” in business and theological terms, it is still inspired by the etymological sense of economy as house rule (from *oikos* and *nomos*). Fortunately enough, UBS has its own translation policy or house rule on translation!

In UBS circles and beyond, Scripture translation theories and practices have been driven mostly from linguistic, missionary, and electronic perspectives with less emphasis on business ethics or theological input. Interactions between linguistics and information technology, coupled with biblical exegesis, have produced and are still providing the best biblical source texts. Missionary concerns have pushed translation communities to publish Scriptures that are easily understandable by the majority of readers without any mediation (that is, no need of footnotes or trained ministers). This is one of the presuppositions which lie behind the theory of functional equivalence, as it specifically promotes Scriptures in common language. Nevertheless, it is sometimes overlooked that the functional equivalence theory, as developed by Eugene Nida, highly recommends the use of the best source texts.

While the positive impact of the linguistic, missionary, and electronic approaches is obvious, they still need to be handled with care. If insufficient attention is paid to the use of basic exegetical tools (beginning with the best source texts), it is certain that Scripture translations will be laid on shaky foundations. *Material* foundations for good translations include the best source texts, namely the latest editions of the *Biblia Hebraica* for the Old Testament, the Septuagint for the deuterocanonical books, and the Greek New Testament. The *spiritual* foundations, Jesus himself as the cornerstone (1 Cor 3.10-11) and the twelve apostles as foundation stones (Rev 21.14), will not be addressed here.

In a critical and competitive era like the twenty-first century, failing to translate from the best sources may incur devastating consequences, in terms of both business and theology. One negative business outcome would be a progressive loss of trust in versions that are based on other translations rather than the best available sources. Such versions have been referred to as “translations of translations” (Mojola 2002, 206), “secondary translations,” and even “tertiary versions” (Wendland 2009, 120), or simply “adaptations” and “second-hand translations.” Loss of trust in such translations might also affect the theologies of the target audiences, as the translations may not be taken seriously in theological discussions, except to be exposed as evidence of unfortunate and uncritical renderings. Nowadays, young people interested in knowing how Scripture translation is carried out often want to know whether this is done from “original” sources. If the answer is negative, they are disappointed, wondering whether they are being cheated. Instead of manufacturing justifications to appease our conscience, why should we not directly address these deeply felt needs of such potential young readers? Otherwise, the increasing number of readers who question the technical value of “translations of translations” might reach disastrous proportions in the long run. Furthermore, new words coined in a target language translation based on another translation introduce both linguistic and theological problems.

Such potentially disastrous consequences do not imply that there won't be salvation for the majority of Christians who rely on these secondary translations. Such translations have been vital in the spread of the gospel both in the past and present. But the issue at stake is that some readers have started doubting them. Besides, the main motive for translating the Scripture should not be the idea that translation is the only way of attaining salvation for the majority of people. The salvation process can also be triggered by Scripture in a different language, or by another aspect of Christian life (for example, sacraments, ethics, and pastoral care). Moreover, the word of God is more than the canonical writings; it consists of the love of God made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. He is not totally entangled in the Scripture, be it original or translated text. But if Scripture is the best venue for mediating the encounter with Jesus, it should also be handled in the best possible way in terms of content, form, and format. The task of translating the Scripture becomes more meaningful when it aims specifically at maintaining the salvation and sanctification process, while representing more faithfully the founding texts. Therefore, the maintenance of faith by a translated Scripture requires it to meet a high standard, lest it confuse the readers, nurture suspicions, or provoke derision.

It is important to address at least the two following questions. What kind of business is Scripture translation? Which type of theology does it rely on or propagate? The working hypothesis of this study is that translating the Scripture from the best sources can be supported by translation business ethics and translation theologies. This hypothesis is motivated by a simple and yet painful statement of fact: that production of adaptations, or "translations of translations," continues unceasingly, even after the bicentenary celebrations of the Bible Society movement in 2004. Speaking positively, I wish to promote more of what Wendland (2008, 120) calls "primary translations" (translations done directly from the "original" biblical sources). Arguments supporting this hypothesis are presented in three sections. The first section describes a current understanding of Scripture translation. The second section deals with a few historical landmarks of Scripture translation practices (the Septuagint translators and Saint Jerome). The third and last section engages in exploring the meaning of Scripture translation in the light of the Newport Declaration (with reference also to the Seoul Statement), and in relation to concepts of business and theology.

What is Scripture translation?

Scripture translation is not limited to one mode of transfer, though a single medium has dominated the print era. It can involve transfer from one medium to another, such as from an oral text to a written one, from a written text to a painted one, from a printed text to an audio-visual one, or from one script to another (for example, transcription, transliteration, or digitisation). The original languages of Scripture are Hebrew and Aramaic for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament, and Greek also serves as the most reliable secondary language for the deuterocanonical books. John 19.20 mentions an interesting case where three source languages (Hebrew, Latin, and Greek) were simultaneously used in delivering a message. This highlights the importance of Latin in Scripture

translation studies, not only because of this single mention, but also because of Latinisms found in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospel of Mark. Moreover, Latin is the language in which the first translation of the full Bible (Old and New Testament) was ever done in the history of Christianity.

Any translation process includes some degree of deletion, distortion, generalisation, specification, similarity and dissimilarity, equivalence or functionality. Translation is not a one-way process; it is an intercultural phenomenon which achieves its mediation through negotiations between the stakeholders (human, textual, and divine). Scripture translation aims at sharing information and fostering communion between the sender, the messenger, and the receiver. In short, translation is a complex endeavour, a mediated communication, framed by numerous contexts within which it takes place. “Contextual frames” for Scripture translation include cognitive, sociocultural, organisational, textual, lexical, analytical, and communicational frames. The important stakeholders and translation frames are located in three sets of cultures (original biblical cultures, church cultures, and contemporary cultures). With respect to the original biblical cultures, the source texts need to be those which are critically established, not previous translations. The history of Bible translation is full of inspiring examples of turning to the text in its original languages for the basis of translation. We will examine only two, owing to their impact on the mainstream churches: the Septuagint translators and Saint Jerome.

Some historical landmarks of Scripture translation

The Septuagint

The history of Bible translations goes back to the fifth century B.C. when scribes were commissioned to interpret orally the Hebrew text into Aramaic, the common language at that time (Neh 8.8). Sometime between the fifth and second centuries B.C. a revision of the Pentateuch in the Samaritan Hebrew dialect was produced. Hebrew-Aramaic Bible translation can be traced back to the third century B.C. (for example, the Pentateuch Targum of Onkelos). Aramaic and Samaritan versions are similar in that their source texts and target audiences belong to the same Semitic culture, despite the use of different languages or dialects.

From the third century B.C. onwards, Scripture translation took an unprecedented step, from being a single-culture event to becoming an intercultural business. The Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek constitutes a historical and literary landmark, bridging two cultures (Semitic and Hellenistic), although the main target was still the Jewish community. According to the apocryphal *Letter of Aristeas* (39, 43, 121) and Josephus (*Ant.* 12.2.13), seventy-two elders (six representing each of the twelve Israelite tribes) carried out this translation at the request of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, king of Egypt (287–247 B.C.), on behalf of the Jewish community in Alexandria. In addition to this political dimension, the letter also indicates an important cultural aspect whereby the LXX was to enrich the Alexandrian royal library with Jewish sacred writings. In terms of ethics, the translators were to be, according to King Ptolemy, “men of noble life, skilled in law” (that is, Torah) and “able to interpret it.” No reliable source has been able to settle the matter of exactly how many translators there

were, but it is certain that the LXX was the work of a team of highly skilled scribes: “The High Priest selected men of the finest character and the highest culture They were men who had not only acquired proficiency in Jewish literature, but had studied most carefully that of the Greeks as well” (*Let. Aris.*, 121). Josephus has recorded that the LXX translators, on the order of the king, were treated in such a way that “they would suffer nothing to interrupt them in their work” (*Ant.* 12.2.13). More objective studies show that the LXX was not a single initiative, but the work of many scholars over many years. Yet it is critically established that every piece of this translation was done from a Hebrew or Aramaic text, except for a few books or additions which might have been written directly in Greek. Jews and Christians considered it as their own Bible, until the two communities became increasingly separate over the first four centuries of the Greco-Roman period. In spite of it being a non-Christian enterprise, Christians did not reject this translation, though they did some revisions in the third and fourth centuries, following second-century revisions by Jewish scholars. For much of the early church, the LXX was the only sacred Scripture, to which the NT books were added to complete the Christian Bible. Of course that was not the end of the story for Scripture translation, and before long other translations such as the Vulgate began to appear.

The Vulgate

Many early versions of the Old Testament were based on the LXX, namely the Old Latin (second century), Syriac Peshitta (second century), Egyptian or Coptic (second century), Ethiopic or Amharic (fourth century), Gothic (fifth century), Armenian (fifth century), Georgian (sixth century), Syriac (seventh century), and Slavic (from the ninth century) versions. The proliferation of these second-hand translations eventually raised the issue of the “original” and most credible source text. Consequently, the Syriac Peshitta and the Vulgate soon gained the prestige which until then was enjoyed only by the LXX among most Christians. But with the support for the Latin language in the post-Constantine Roman Empire, the Vulgate superseded both the LXX and the Peshitta versions, particularly from the ninth century onwards. However, after the schism of 1054, the LXX regained more weight in the Orthodox Church while the Vulgate continued to be authoritative in the Catholic Church even after Luther’s Reformation in the sixteenth century. As Bruce M. Metzger (2001, 29-30) puts it:

Whether one considers the Vulgate from a purely secular view, . . . or whether one has in view only the specifically religious influence, the extent of its penetration into all areas of Western culture is almost beyond calculation. The theology and the devotional language typical of the Roman Catholic Church were either created or transmitted by the Vulgate. Both Protestants and Roman Catholics are heirs of terminology that Jerome coined or baptized in fresh significance—words such as salvation, regeneration, justification, sanctification, propitiation, reconciliation, inspiration, Scripture, sacrament, and many others.

Jerome himself states that “ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ” (Prologue to his commentary on Isaiah). Clearly Jerome is confident in the Scripture either in its original form or in translation. In the case of a translation, the confidence is based on both spiritual foundations (Christ and

the Apostles) and solid material foundations (the best available source texts). The Vulgate had both. Even though it is a common language version (*vulgus* meaning “common” in Latin), both the translator (Jerome) and the commissioner (Pope Damasus) chose to base the work directly on the “original sources.” It was not an easy task, as Jerome had to spend years of preparation in Palestine to be able to translate from the best sources, after realising that the inspired texts are those in the original languages. This meant for him that any serious translation had to be directly based on, or revised from, the original texts. The context of antagonism between Jews and Christians during Jerome’s time meant that any serious handling of the biblical texts had to be based on the best source texts, but also on clearly formulated principles. Jerome’s Vulgate is credited with the honour of being “the first translation to be done by someone who formulated and discussed well developed ideas on translation, such as the conflict between literal translation and idiomatic rendering of the meaning” (Kruger 2001).

While the LXX exemplifies teamwork translation, the Vulgate was a single-handed translation. But both were based on the most reliable sources at the time. The translators were selected by the highest authority of the faith community concerned (High Priest Eleazar for the LXX, and Pope Damasus for the Vulgate). The translators had to master both source and target languages and literatures. The translators were entitled to the most conducive conditions of work. As a result, the impact of their work is simply beyond calculation and imagination! UBS has the best biblical sources at its disposal, has the support of the highest church authorities, can select the most gifted translators, and provides professional translation principles and scholarly handbooks. On what account, then, can UBS continue producing translations of translations in some parts of its worldwide constituency? What can we learn from the 2004 World Assembly (WA), which produced the Newport Declaration?

Scripture translation in the Newport Declaration: Business and theology *Translations and adaptations*

Before tackling Scripture translation as business and theology, it is important to draw a clear distinction between translation and adaptation as officially viewed in UBS circles. The UBS approach to translation “is based on a policy of achieving accuracy in meaning and faithfulness to the source language texts, and by the charter of the national Bible Societies, the publishers, to serve all the churches by meeting their Scripture needs for worship, nurture and mission” (Thomas et al. 2004, 21). These same authors view “adaptation” as a synonym for “localised version.” Localised versions are explained as “derivative products prepared and published for different linguistic communities from the original product,” and in “a narrow definition localised version is taken to be translation.” This remark is useful, as the majority of ordinary readers might not perceive the technical difference between a translated text and a localised one. However, the document notes that “in computer terminology ‘localisation’ means translating software instructions and information from one language to another so that software prepared for use in one locality, that is, for one speech language, can be used in another community where a different speech language is spoken” (102). Two examples

of localised products are given. First, the Swahili Congo Bible (Bukavu Swahili *Biblia Maandiko Matakafifu Kwa Watu Wote*) is an example of an adaptation of an existing Scripture translation, namely the Swahili Good News Bible of Tanzania and Kenya (Swahili *Biblia Habari Njema*).

The second is an example of a children's Bible. Taking as its model "The Children's Bible" published by Scandinavia Publishing House (1989), an adaptation of the *Biblia Habari Njema* was made to produce a Swahili Children's Bible. The changes from the original version consisted mainly in selecting texts from the full Bible and placing them in the format of the Scandinavia Children's Bible. A more extensive adaptation was made in the French version, *La Bible pour enfants* (2000), which was based on the new version of the Bible in simple French called *Parole de Vie* (2000). This adaptation included not only text selection but also the introduction of bridge material and discourse transitional material.

In some cases, adaptations are facilitated by computer software, such as SIL's programs CARLA (Computer Assisted Related Language Adaptation) and CADA (Computer Assisted Dialect Adaptation). "This approach uses computer software to make a machine adaptation of a base text in one dialect into a related dialect or language. This basic draft version is then edited by a mother-tongue speaker of the second dialect to ensure that both translation accuracy and linguistic style meet the required standards for Scripture translation" (Thomas et al. 2004, 103). Similar in intent but simpler in function is the more recent development of the Adapt It software (see other articles in this issue).

It thus becomes clear that translations and adaptations are not necessarily the same thing, even if the terms are used interchangeably in some contexts. For economic and theological reasons, translation projects based directly on the best original biblical sources and not on other versions or adaptations need to be seen as top priorities. An adaptation tool like Adapt It would be more appropriate when a given community would like to test the degree of similarity and difference between the existing literal and common language "translations" in a same or another related language. The results of such comparison may lead to the undertaking of a revision or a new translation project, after the data have been compared with the latest editions of the best biblical source texts, the most recent developments in the target language, and the current theological trends in the church. In this case, Adapt It will be very useful and can be safely recommended. There is no doubt that Adapt It offers great potential for revision projects which are set up for a specific reason, such as old fashion or unnatural style, unsatisfactory principles, inadequate textual bases, and unacceptable theological features (Thomas et al. 2004, 21).

However, at the moment Africa strongly needs a strategy to ensure that Scripture is translated or revised with uncompromising adherence to UBS policy. Thus African translation projects will be continuing the commendable tradition which started with the LXX translators in Egypt and was more recently taken up by those of the Gospels of Matthew and John in the Ga Language (1843), the Afrikaans Bible (1933), the Swahili Habari Njema Bible (1995), or the Malagasy Common Language Bible (2003). The story behind the Afrikaans Bible is an

interesting one. Hermanson (2002, 8-9) reports: “The first attempt to translate the Gospels and Psalms from the State Bible met with such adverse criticism when it appeared in 1922, that it was decided to start a completely new translation from the original languages.” The first two Gospels in Ga were translated by a catechist who had an impressive command of NT Greek and his mother tongue. Currently, all UBS translation projects in Congo-Brazzaville (Congo) and half of those in Congo-Kinshasa (DR Congo) are directly based on the best available biblical source texts. This constitutes the beginning of a better understanding of the policy of the UBS core business in both Congos. UBS translation policy agrees with the majority of professional translation communities worldwide, for whom any credible translation ought to be done from the best existing source text, from which the translator has “to follow strictly the author’s intent and style, and . . . make the sentences smooth and readable” (Whang 1999, 200, 49).

Translation as business

The Newport Declaration introduced a revolutionary concept in how UBS perceives its own identity not only as regards mission and leadership, but also as business. All UBS major operations, including translation, need to be carried out in light of these new insights. The term “business” might be considered shocking for a movement which for 200 years has defined its identity in terms of Christian mission. This is not a contradiction, but it shows a qualitative growth in the understanding of the identity and mission of the organisation and its major operations. Applied to Scripture translation, “business” needs first to be understood against the background of translation as mission and leadership in UBS. With regard to translation and business, the Newport Declaration states:

In fulfilling our mission to achieve the widest possible, effective and meaningful distribution of the Holy Scriptures, we affirm that:

1. Translation remains at the heart of our task. Faithful translation of the original text, meeting the highest standards of accuracy and professional integrity, in words that speak to the hearts and minds of readers, is a major pillar of our UBS mission.

As for leadership, Newport states that “leadership inspires and encourages the organisation to fulfil its purpose, set strategies, pull people and concepts together and responds to challenges and threats.” The declaration thus shows, first, that the WA, the top governance body of UBS, fully endorses the position that Scripture translations are to be based on “the original text” and meet “the highest standards of accuracy and professional integrity.” The same position is taken in the “UBS Guidelines for Scripture Translation”: “In conformity with UBS policy, the best and most reliable original language base texts should be used.” Second, the WA is committed to support executive decisions which will lead to fulfilment of this purpose, based on right strategies, people, and concepts. It is not the responsibility of the governing body to enforce such decisions, but executive officers must be aware of them and implement them with their staff.

The Newport Declaration does not make explicit reference to translation when dealing with business, but requires any task in UBS to be conducted with efficiency, transparency, and mutual accountability:

Our business processes exist as means of fulfilling our mission. In the conduct of our business, we affirm that:

1. Efficiency, transparency and mutual accountability must characterise our way of working. We are all stewards of God's resources whether these are provided by our own initiatives, by Bible Society supporters or through the worldwide fellowship. Proactive provision of information to and from donors creates the best environment for generous giving and mutual trust.

It is worth noting that efficiency, transparency, and mutual accountability are all ethical categories, especially those of business ethics. Applied to Scripture translation, efficiency would entail preparing and delivering Scripture products which rigorously respect the established policy and the market demands. Efficiency, transparency, and mutual accountability would require the existence of a system which can allow a translation product to be checked against its own policy and the demands of the market. Whether this kind of quality control is put in place by UBS or other institutions, or both, does not matter much, though it would be more beneficial for UBS to be involved. In any case, the quality assessment of UBS translation products has already begun, as can be noted in the book *Translating the Bible* (Porter and Hess 1999). Furthermore, a quality control system would encourage UBS to take more seriously its commitment toward managing its translation operations with business-like rigour, while assuming at the same time its leadership role. Besides, mission and leadership are essential features of a proper business. Any successful business entails a clear mission and the cultivation of leadership virtues such as courage, self-control, justice, decision-making and implementation, generosity, sympathy and understanding, care and responsibility. In the light of the translation business ethics of the Newport Declaration, translation executives and technical staff ought to promote business-like rigour in all respects. In UBS circles, however, the concept of translation mission is also theologically loaded.

Translation as theology

The Newport Declaration reaffirms the UBS mission as consisting of “the widest possible, effective and meaningful distribution of the Holy Scriptures.” What is the theological basis of this statement?

Knowing that UBS works in close partnership with churches, it is likely that the UBS mission statement has been phrased to give support to the great commission (Matt 19.16-20). According to Bosch (2002, 66), “three terms in the ‘Great Commission’ summarize the essence of mission for Matthew: make disciples, baptize and teach.” These terms indicate that UBS cannot carry out this mission if it does not cooperate with the churches, as making disciples, baptizing, and teaching are exclusively church tasks. In other words, the UBS mission is to be understood as participating in the fundamental mission of the churches. More theological thinking is needed to establish boundaries and areas of active cooperation between church mission in general and the UBS role in particular. At the moment, it is enough to note that through Scripture translation and distribution, UBS contributes to making disciples, nurturing the baptized with Scripture, and engaging Christians to learn or do theology on the basis of the best Scripture source texts or contextually most accurate translations.

Moreover, theological models (or paradigms) for mission keep shifting. In Africa today there are at least four such models: inculturation, liberation, reconstruction, and postcolonialism. Inculturation theology supports the incarnation of the Gospel in a given culture and the evangelisation of that culture. Liberation theology struggles to free people from unnecessary burdens. Reconstruction theology argues for the rebuilding of all aspects of human life. Postcolonial criticism seeks to understand the full impact of the colonial enterprise and free people from the mindsets which created both coloniser and colonised, in order to be who they really are. Each of these different theological trends deserves more research to investigate its implications for Scripture translations. One thing is certain: all these theologies are scholarly endeavours and only Scripture translations that are critically sound will provide a secure basis for necessary and fruitful interactions with theological schools. In this way a competitive Scripture translation will achieve its broader goal of being an active part of church mission and theology. Then UBS translation business will become more meaningful and more relevant. Adaptations or translations of translations cannot take UBS to that level, either globally or locally, because the adaptation hermeneutic favours a great deal of colonialism, which the current theological trends in Africa would hardly tolerate. Even now, a colonial situation can be (re)produced any time in Africa when a given linguistic community happens to use an African or a non-African Bible translation as the basis for an adaptation or for a second-hand translation. In such a case, translators and target readers—whether they like it or not—are mentally forced to internalize and communicate foreign meanings that might be relevant to the contexts of those who produced them but not necessarily to the intended contexts. This view does not mean that any type of interaction with every translation should be avoided, it just underscores that no translation should preferably serve as the basis for another translation while best sources are accessible.

How does the 2004 Newport Declaration resonate with the 2010 Seoul Statement on business and theology? One might argue that in Seoul the WA reaffirmed the business stand of UBS particularly in the following terms: “Bible Societies in the Global South need help to improve their sustainability through local fundraising” (Statement 8). Each UBS department, including translation, is therefore encouraged to perk up its business skills.

Concerning theology, Seoul opens up a new focus for UBS identity and ethos, as it calls upon strategic alliances with “theological education institutions” (cf. Statement 6a). Moreover, Seoul urges UBS to “actively seek to engage with young people, in a spirit of respect and humility, within their own youth culture” (Statement 15). As a result, when UBS translators undertake to interact with young people from theological institutions, they should be prepared to make relevant contributions based on a proper command of biblical languages and contextual theologies, to name just two requirements. Furthermore, if questions are raised about their project funding, they can gain more credibility if they confidently show how they participate in fundraising activities to sustain their ministry.

Conclusion

The main hypothesis of this study has been that translating the Scripture from the best sources can be supported by translation business ethics and translation theologies. This hypothesis seems to have been confirmed through the following findings. First, the UBS translation business policy, as enshrined in the Newport Declaration (and also the Seoul Statement), the Manual for UBS Translation Officers, and the Translation Guidelines all argue for Scripture translation made from “original” biblical source texts. Second, adaptations or translations of translations are not ideal solutions to people’s need for Scripture, and can be tolerated only in very limited cases, as exceptions to the general rule. Third, translations directly based on the best biblical source texts are economically more sustainable both in business and theological terms. In summary, let’s translate Scriptures from the best sources out of respect for our own house rule, for the sake of our business and theological growth, as well as out of respect for other competing translation communities. Practically speaking, when a UBS translator is asked the question “What do you actually do?” a simple but economically and theologically sound answer from an interconfessional perspective would be “I work with a team, translating the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and the Greek New Testament into our mother tongue.”

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