

### Must 'Notes' be 'Foot-?'

In TBT 31.3 (pp. 322-4) Fr. Buzzetti presents wise and timely thoughts on the need to consider the introductions and comparable materials (his remarks also apply to headings though he does not mention these specifically) in our published Scriptures with as much care as we give to the body of the text, if the whole publication is going to have maximum positive effect and minimum risk of misleading the reader. He discusses as 'Type A' explanations of the reasons and principles which have guided the production of the particular translation, as 'Type B' presentations of a "kerygmatic" nature explaining what the Bible is and why it should be translated and read, and as 'Type C' elucidations of cultural and historical background which would have been familiar to the original audience but not to the audience to which the translation is addressed.

I would like to make a brief further comment on the presentation of this 'Type C' material. It is probably a universal experience of Bible translators that there is some such background knowledge without which the reader/hearer will be hard-pressed to make any useful interpretation of the passage concerned but which it would be far too cumbersome to incorporate into the text itself. Fr. Buzetti alludes to "footnotes" (p. 323, para. on "Type C materials"; p. 324, final para.) and to "a word-list or glossary" (p. 324, penult. para.), and we normally accept without question that such will be the form that elucidations will take. Most readers and writers of TBT are educated—if not academic—people who are used to looking down to footnotes and at the back for glossary or appendix. I myself am so addicted to footnotes that I am seriously hampered in considering work of colleagues in Ivory Coast and Mexico who use superscript numerals to indicate tones—I keep looking round for the notes corresponding to the numbers! A common-sense rethink, however, will soon make us realize that the majority of readers, even in societies with a long tradition of literacy, do not normally use materials where they have to be aware of and make use of footnotes. I suspect that even undergraduate university students very often by-pass notes in their reading.

If we reconsider the problem from scratch, it is clear that we are looking for methods of presenting supplementary information in such a way that it is clear that it is not part of the scriptural text, but so that it is easily accessible and usable by the reader at the point where he needs it. In other words there needs to be a lot of experimentation with typefaces and type-size, boxes, square-bracketed items at the end of paragraphs, and similar devices, to find out ways of filling this need. The features of traditional layout were mainly determined by the exigencies of the letterpress printing process where each separate letter had to be picked out and locked into position in a whole-page unit. The modern photo-litho and other processes allow for much more flexibility and variation in layout with little extra cost: commercial journalism (especially 'arty', 'pop' and 'underground' magazines) since the sixties has offered a vast range of ideas which could be sifted for possible solutions to our problem. In Bible Society and related contexts there is clearly a need for consultation with those on the technical side of production and with those who study the findings of existing psycholinguistic research (in connection with advertising, including roadside traffic signs, reading research, and typeface design, amongst other specialities)

and also some new research with potential readers of scriptures in a variety of cultural settings (variables of social/educational class, geography, language, length of history of literacy in the society/language/individual . . .).

Of course, we might end up with footnotes as the proven best solution, but then again we might not . . .

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## REVIEWS

Ernesto Cardenal, **Psalms**. Translated by Thomas Blackburn and others. London: Sheed and Ward 1981. 80 pp. £3.00.

The first thing to be said about these poems is that they are not translations of the Psalms, but brilliant, sometimes moving reinterpretations. Comparison with a standard translation such as RSV is not always possible, but a few examples where this can be done show the scope of these new poems.

### RSV

I can count all my bones  
(Ps. 22.17a)

How shall we sing the Lord's song  
in a foreign land?  
(Ps. 137.4)

Then my tongue shall tell of thy  
righteousness  
and of thy praise all the day long.  
(Ps. 35.28)

### Cardenal

All my bones can be counted as on an  
X-ray film . . .

They ask us to sing in our language  
'Something native' from Sion  
But away from our country how  
could we ever begin . . .

O  
God  
why  
do I spend my life  
writing  
poems  
to  
you?

Bible translators clearly cannot take these poems as a model, still less as a base, for their own work. But they can read them as an inspiration, and then put them carefully on one side. At least the English versions do not sound at all like translations from Spanish, and in this sense normal Bible translators can learn from them, as well as finding in them refreshment for their souls. P.E.

Hartmann, R. R. K.: *Contrastive Textology. Comparative Discourse Analysis in Applied Linguistics*. Heidelberg: Julius Gross Verlag. 125 pp., DM 24.00.

This highly technical study has practical relevance to translation (though not specially to Bible translation), and to such related disciplines as lexicography. Two chapters are concerned respectively with "Translation Processes" and "Aspects of Literary Translation". By coincidence, one of the appendices contains two complete English translations of the Duino Elegy discussed by Prof. Reiss in her article in *TBTT* 32 (1) (January 1981).