

and natives find this no serious obstacle. The native Taiwanese, who have had a Junior Middle School education with a smattering of English, learn the system of Romanization in about two weeks.

For those who prefer the system of Romanization based on the Choan-Chiu dialect, it will be comforting to know that the revision of the Romanized Amoy Bible (RAB) which the Protestant Bible Societies have already begun, will be in the Choan-Chiu dialect.

HEBER F. PEACOCK

BIBLE TRANSLATION INTO SIMPLE FRENCH

(A Review Article)

Monsieur Pierre de Beaumont, the Consul General of France in the Ivory Coast, has been engaged in the preparation and translation of literary materials into simple French for a number of years. He first became interested in the production of literature for new readers while he was on a diplomatic assignment in North Africa. He observed that even after students had spent several years in French schools, they were unable to read normal French literary materials with any degree of understanding. Moved by a deep concern that the riches of French literature be made available to the new learner of the language, he began to translate some of the masterpieces of French literature into a form of simple French which could be understood by beginners in the language. His task was not conceived primarily as that of providing literacy materials as an aid to language learning, although his materials are very helpful in this area. Rather, he recognized that the teaching of the French language and the development of literacy ultimately had little value unless there was something worth reading in a form of the language that could be understood by the new literate. In the course of the years, he has translated or written more than fifty books in 'modern French for the man of today'. He has become one of the foremost authorities in the growing field of the production of good reading materials in French for new literates.

It is only in recent years that M. de Beaumont has become interested in the translation of the Scriptures. After much success in simple language translation, he one day asked himself, 'If French literature can be translated in this way, why would it not be possible to translate the Word of God into clear and simple French?' This significant question has led him into the task of Bible translating, which now occupies a major part of his time.

His first translation of Biblical material, a selection of the most important texts of the Gospels, titled *La Parole du Christ*, appeared in 1966, with a second edition in 1967.¹ This was followed in rapid succession by translations of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the Book of Acts, and a

¹ *La Parole du Christ. Essai de traduction en français moderne de textes essentiels des Évangiles* par Pierre de Beaumont. Paris: Fayard-Mame, 1966, pp. 92.

selection of important texts from the Old Testament.² The books published so far are limited to a vocabulary of about 450 to 950 basic words, plus a few technical terms required by the subject matter of the Bible. All have been published in paper back editions by the publishing firm Fayard-Mame, at prices ranging from 2.57 to 5.00 French Francs. All are provided with brief explanatory notes for difficult passages and a glossary of difficult terms. The work of translation continues as M. de Beaumont is now at work on the translation of some of the epistles of the New Testament.

In the preparation of materials in simple French two needs have been kept constantly in mind: the use of simple, but correct, grammatical structures and the limitation of vocabulary to the more familiar, common terms. The choices have normally been made intuitively on the basis of experience, but in doubtful cases, word frequency lists and common-word dictionaries have been consulted. There has also been an attempt to grade materials in such a way that a book intended for the newest reader will employ very simple structures and quite limited vocabulary, while books intended for the more advanced reader will make use of more involved structures and introduce a somewhat more complicated vocabulary. The vocabulary range is from about 400 basic words, in material prepared for the new literate, to about 1,500 basic words in books for use by the more advanced student. There is a corresponding increase in grammatical complexity.

One might think that a book written with a vocabulary limited to only 400 basic words would, of necessity, be able to present only quite simple, child-like ideas, and that the style would have to be quite wooden and monotonous. This is certainly not the case in the books translated or written by M. de Beaumont. He has developed his skill in translating complicated literary French into simple French to such an extent that even the advanced reader is hardly aware that limitations have been imposed. The material reads smoothly, the style is pleasant, and involved ideas are presented in ways that can be grasped readily. Any doubts in this regard can easily be dispelled by a reading of his translation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*. There is a charm about the translation which the most sophisticated reader will appreciate. M. de Beaumont's delightful *Biography of Napoleon* is another example of the way in which he can develop major themes while employing direct grammatical structures and limited vocabulary.

In spite of the fact that limited vocabulary and simple grammatical structures are employed, there is a beauty about the books that is quite charming. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that a form of the French language is employed which is normally associated with spoken French.

² *L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu*. Traduction en français moderne par Pierre de Beaumont. Paris: Fayard-Mame, 1967, pp. 163.

L'Évangile selon saint Marc aux hommes d'aujourd'hui par Pierre de Beaumont. Paris: Fayard-Mame, 1967, pp. 107.

Évangile selon saint Luc. Traduction en français moderne par Pierre de Beaumont. Paris: Fayard-Mame, 1966, pp. 128.

L'Évangile selon saint Jean aux hommes d'aujourd'hui par Pierre de Beaumont. Paris: Fayard-Mame, 1967, pp. 125.

L'Ancien Testament. Essai de traduction moderne des textes essentiels aux hommes d'aujourd'hui par Pierre de Beaumont. Paris: Fayard-Mame, 1967, pp. 221.

A large part of the success of these translations must be attributed to M. de Beaumont's ability to break ideas into shorter sense units that can be read or spoken in a single breath. This subordination of the written word to the limits of the spoken word is a distinct aid to the new reader. Some of his translations have been published in lines of sense unit length, thus leaving an uneven right margin on each page. This can be a real blessing for the new reader who has not yet developed his reading ability to the extent that such reading pauses are introduced automatically. This printing in sense lines gives to the translation an almost poetic appearance. To select an example at random, Matthew 7: 13 f. appears in the following form, when translated rather literally back into English:

Enter by the narrow gate.
The road which leads to death
is broad and easy;
many take it.
The gate and the road which lead to life
are narrow and difficult;
few find them.

M. de Beaumont, a Roman Catholic, has made every effort to insure that his translations are in no way doctrinally biased. His only concern is that the Biblical message be conveyed as accurately as possible in the kind of current language that will be readily understood by the readers for whom it is intended. He has had the help of Protestant and Roman Catholic scholars and pastors in avoiding any expressions which might be misinterpreted. He himself has not had formal theological training, yet he is a careful student of the Bible. It was felt that a translation of this kind should not attempt to break new exegetical ground, but should express in clear language the accepted positions reflected in the available translations.

La Parole du Christ is a selection of passages from the Gospels. It contains a brief account of the birth of Jesus, drawn from the first chapter of Luke, followed by a section titled 'Jesus in Galilee' which includes the visit to Nazareth (Luke 4), the call of the disciples (Luke 5), two healing miracles (Luke 5 and 8), selections from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 to 7), the parable of the sower (Matt. 13), Jesus and the children (Luke 18, Matt. 18), Jesus and the sick man (Mark 10), Jesus in the house of Simon (Luke 7), and the confession of the disciples (Matt. 16).

The second major part, titled 'Jesus in Judea', includes words of Jesus to his disciples (Luke 10, John 15), the good Samaritan (Luke 10), prayer (Luke 10, 11, 18), the question about taxes (Luke 20), the wicked servant (Matt. 18), the parables of Luke 15, the parable of the feast (Luke 14), and material from Luke 19.

The third part is titled 'Jesus in Jerusalem', and includes the triumphal entry (Matt. 21, Mark 11), the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25), parables from Luke 12 and 13, the end of the world (Matt. 25), the decision to kill Jesus (John 7, 11, Matt. 26), the last supper (Matt. 26, Luke 22), Jesus before Pilate (Luke 22, John 18), the crucifixion (Luke 23, John 19), and appearances of the risen Lord (Luke 24, John 20, Matt. 28).

As one can see, the essential elements of the Gospel story have been provided in the brief space of some seventy small pages. Each person would be inclined to drop some of the passages selected and add others, but it is a choice which gives the new reader some of the essential information about the life and death of Jesus.

In a translation of this kind, which will be the first Biblical material many readers will see, it is necessary to omit many verses and parts of verses, even in those sections of the text which have been included. Yet it is remarkable how much has been retained in this short compass. In order to alert the reader and to avoid any misunderstanding, an ellipsis (. . .) in the text indicates that material has been omitted. Many of the sections are also provided with brief introductory statements which set the stage for the incident, partially compensate for their brevity, and provide the reader with needed help in relating each incident to the larger story.

Perhaps the easiest way to convey something of the simplicity and beauty of the translation is to attempt to retranslate one of the sections into comparable English. The announcement of the birth of Jesus, retaining the sentence structure, but not the sense line structure, reads as follows:

God sends the angel Gabriel to a village named Nazareth in Galilee. In that village, a virgin (jeune fille) is engaged to a man named Joseph. . . . The name of that virgin is Mary. The angel comes into her home. He says to her, 'I greet you, beloved of God. The Lord is with you'. Mary is astonished. She doesn't understand. But the angel says to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary. God loves you. . . . You will have a son. You will give him the name Jesus. He will be great. He will be called Son of God. . .'. Mary says to the angel, 'How is that possible? I am a virgin'. The angel answers her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and will take you under his shadow. You will bear a child. He will be called Son of God. . . . Nothing is impossible with God.' Then Mary says, 'I am the servant of the Lord. May it happen as you say!' The angel leaves her.

A comparison of this text with the Greek will show, apart from numerous omissions, that a number of devices have been employed to make the translation clear and simple. The vocabulary, relatively simple even in English, is perhaps even more simple in French. Involved structures are often simplified. The passive in verse 26 'the angel Gabriel was sent from God' is changed to the active.

Instead of the complicated 'to a city of Galilee which was named Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph', the sentence structure has been rearranged in a much more simple and logical form.

The translation of *kecharitōmenē* presented real difficulties. How could the idea of one favored by God be expressed in simple, understandable French. *L'aimée de Dieu* (one loved of God) is not perfect, but it does convey the correct general idea, and is not open to some of the objections to other terms proposed.

Verse 34 'How can this be, since I do not know a man' was at first translated, 'How is that possible? I am and I remain a virgin. (Je suis et je reste une jeune fille)'. This was an attempt to translate the basic idea in the Greek,

but when it was pointed out that the translation might possibly be misinterpreted as referring to the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary, there was immediate agreement to the change to the simple 'I am a virgin'.

The translations of the Gospels and Acts have been made with a larger vocabulary than that found in *La Parole du Christ*. The translations also include what is almost a complete text. One is again impressed with the clarity of expression and with the preservation of the essential message, even where minor elements of the original are not preserved. A retranslation into comparable English of the opening verses of the Gospel of Luke, a rather complicated single sentence in Greek, may serve as an example of what has been done:

Many people have told the story
of what happened among us.
Some saw these events (les faits)
and since then, they have repeated the word of God.
I, in my turn,
listened to everyone,
I asked questions,
and I decided to write the story for you,
friend of God.
In this way you will recognize (tu te rendras compte)
that you have been taught the truth.

It is immediately evident that some elements of the Greek text are not preserved in this translation. 'Many people have told the story of what happened among us' does not represent everything that is included in a more literal translation such as 'Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us . . .'. Yet it must not be forgotten that the more formal translation of the Greek text would convey little or nothing to the new reader, while the simple translation, even if it does not include everything, will convey the essential meaning to new readers and also to those with considerable reading skill.

The contrast is still more striking in verse two: 'just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'. This partial sentence in formal translation is rather difficult to understand even for the rather sophisticated reader, while the translation of M. de Beaumont conveys, in a simple and direct way, the basic truth of what the author intended to say.

There are passages in the Gospels where it has been felt necessary to indicate an omission in the text, rather than translate all the details. Some of these omissions are made because of the difficulty of expressing the idea in simple language. In Matt. 18: 6 'a mill stone large enough to be turned by a donkey' is somewhat difficult to convey in simple language, and since no major element of the message is involved, there was no hesitancy in dropping the words. But in order to make sure that the integrity of the text was preserved, the ellipsis is marked in the text. The translation thus reads, 'it would be better for him if a stone were attached to his neck . . . and he were thrown in the sea'.

Ellipsis marks are also used at times where condensations have been made. The translation of Matt. 5: 34 f. reads, 'Do not promise anything in the name of heaven, nor in the name of something on the earth, nor in the name of Jerusalem. The heaven, the earth, and the city belong to God . . .'. The complicated expression of ideas in the original is replaced by a much simpler formulation, which seems to be quite necessary if any of the basic meaning is to be conveyed to the new reader. In Matt. 6: 28 'neither toil nor spin' is reproduced by 'without working (*sans travailler*)'. It would not have been possible to explain in simple language the rather complicated idea of what is meant by 'spin', but since the content of the message is not dependent on the particular form of work, the simpler form was preferred. In John 19: 39, 'one hundred pounds of a mixture of myrrh and aloes' is replaced with 'perfumes', in order to make the meaning clear to the new reader. The weight and the nature of the spice mixture were not considered to have great significance in the presentation of the message.

In addition to many such omissions and condensations, one finds from time to time expressions which are more or less expansive in character. In Matt. 15: 9, the traditional 'in vain they worship me' becomes 'And what is the good of that for prayer?' At first, this translation may appear to be totally different from the original, but when one keeps in mind the difficulty that will be faced by the new reader with 'in vain' and 'worship', and asks for ways to express the idea, the use of the question in the context does seem to convey the essential message with some adequacy.

Some of the omissions are difficult to account for. In Acts 1: 9, for example, 'he was lifted up, and a cloud took him' is omitted, perhaps because it was feared that this would cause difficulties for the reader. The same reasoning may lie behind the omission in Acts 1: 18 of 'falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out'. This is translated, 'then he died, punished by God'.

The translation generally follows the best supported textual readings, although at times it has been necessary to include significant verses which are not well supported. The possibility of indicating the doubtful character of these verses by the use of half brackets or some other device was considered, but it was felt that the use of such devices in a translation of this kind might be confusing to the reader. For this reason, such passages as Luke 22: 43, 44 and Mark 16: 8-20 appear in the text without any indication of their doubtful textual character. Occasionally also the ellipsis is used to indicate the omission of doubtful material. It is used, for example, in John 3: 13 to indicate the omission of 'the one being in heaven'. It is also used to indicate the omission of Acts 8: 37 (although in the translation part of verse 36 is numbered 37!).

Many of the vocabulary choices for the expression of complicated ideas are well made. It is certainly not always easy to find ways of formulating some of the ideas of the Bible in simple language. For example, the use of a word like 'blasphemy' in Matt. 12: 31 would have made the passage incomprehensible for many readers. In order to avoid the difficult word, the following translation was finally adopted: 'Every sin and every insult against the Son of man will be forgiven, but every insult against the Spirit will not

be forgiven'. Here, by the way, is one of those passages in which a mistake has been allowed to stand in spite of the care taken in checking and revision. Probably under harmonistic influence, the term 'Son of man' has been imported into this verse. The translation should read, 'Every sin and every insult will be forgiven men'. Every translator is plagued by these unexpected slips (and there are others in these translations) which find their way into the text. The only answer to this problem is a second edition.

Some of the vocabulary choices are not ideal, but they seemed to the translator to be the best available for the kind of readers for which the translation was intended. A case in point is the choice of terminology for the devil, Satan, demons, evil spirits, etc. The form *l'Esprit du mal* (the evil Spirit) is used for the devil and Satan, while *esprit(s) du mal* (evil spirit(s)) is used for demons, unclean spirits, spirit of weakness, etc. The translation of 'the law and the prophets' appears sometimes simply as 'the Bible', and at other times in its full form.

Since the translation was intended to be non-sectarian, one other terminology problem had to be faced. As in many languages, French has different forms of many proper names in the Protestant and the Catholic tradition. The problem is solved in two ways in this translation. In cases where one of the forms of a name is closer to that in the Biblical languages, it is adopted. For examples, the Protestant form of 'Isaiah' (Esaïe) is adopted. In other cases, both forms are retained with one in the text, and the other in a footnote.

The book entitled *L'Ancien Testament* is a selection of what are considered to be some of the most important passages in the Old Testament. In addition to the same kind of simple translation previously encountered, with its limited vocabulary (the basic vocabulary is somewhat larger than in the other publications), and simple grammatical structures, one finds here brief explanatory introductions to many of the sections. Gen. 2: 18-25 is introduced in this way, 'The man says of the woman, "She is bone of my bone", that is to say she is like me'. The explanatory introduction to the 'servant poems', beginning with Isa. 42: 1, reads, 'The Israelites believed in a savior who would be a king like David. For the first time, in the exile, a disciple of Isaiah speaks of a savior who would be a servant. One might write that the idea or image of a messiah who would be a prophet comes gradually to be added to that of a messiah-king, son of David. This messiah-prophet or servant is loved by God. He suffers for others. It is by his suffering that he will save his people.'

The brief selections found in the book attempt to give a broad picture of the message of the Old Testament. After sections dealing with 'God and the world' (Gen. 1-11) and 'the promise of God' (Gen. 11-22), one finds material from Exodus, Joshua, Samuel, and Kings, plus Psalm 51, under headings referring to 'the promised land'. 'The time of the prophets' includes, in addition to material about Elijah and Elisha, parts of Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, plus brief selections from Deuteronomy and the Psalms. Under the title 'Exile—suffering and hope of a people' one finds material from Lamentations, Psalms, Ezekiel, and the second part of Isaiah. The final major section, 'return and life in Palestine', includes material from

Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Solomon, Job, Joel, Daniel, and the Song of Songs.

In addition to some of the translational matters which should be improved, it is to be hoped that future editions will correct the numerous errors in verse numbering. This is perhaps not so very important to the average reader, but it does present difficulties for the reader who may wish to compare other translations. In Acts 1:24 ff., for example, verse 25 is included in what is numbered as verse 24; what is actually verse 26 is numbered 25, and no verse number 26 is found at all. There are also a number of typographical errors that need to be corrected.

The minor faults which have been pointed out and others which are apparent, should not blind us to the excellence of the translations as a whole. These translations in simple French make the message of God's Word available to a host of readers for whom the Bible would otherwise be a closed book. The translator ought to be congratulated for his skill in expressing the rich variety of the Biblical message in simple and direct language. His willingness to abandon the structural forms in which the message was originally conveyed in order to preserve that message and convey it to the modern reader ought to be emulated by translators in many languages.

JAN DE WAARD

UN MANUEL DE TRADUCTION ORALE POUR LE PAYS BAMILÉKÉ

Dr Jan Voorhoeve and now Dr Jan de Waard have been working for some time on the problems of oral translation in West Africa and The Bible Translator has been hoping to present some of their findings. This article selects certain examples and many readers could add further instances. Ed.

A. Géographie physique et humaine

Le pays Bamiléké est situé dans le Cameroun de l'Est de 10° à 10°30 E.Gr. et de 4°45 à 5°45 lat. Nord. C'est un vaste quadrilatère de hauts plateaux ondulés, tantôt cultivés et verdoyants, tantôt incultes et dénudés.

D'après les chiffres de 1949 sa population totale dépassait déjà 415.000 habitants tandis que quant à la densité la subdivision administrative de Bafoussam montrait déjà un chiffre tout à fait exceptionnel pour l'Afrique: 87,2 au km².¹ Les recensements les plus récents nous donnent un chiffre de 502.932 habitants, les grands centres urbains et la grande masse d'émigrés non comptés. Vu que le chiffre des Bamiléké émigrés dépasse souvent celui

¹ I. Dugast: 'Inventaire ethnique du Sud-Cameroun', IFAN, Série: populations, No. 1, 1949, pp. 113-123.