

TRANSLATIONS: 1969–1972

The following is based upon a report given by the Editor to the United Bible Societies' General Committee meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during the U.B.S. Assembly in September, 1972. The report outlines some of the major developments which have taken place during the period between the meetings of the General Committee in 1969 and 1972.—Ed.

Introduction

The period 1969 to 1972 has witnessed considerable growth in translations. It is because of this growth that a report covering these years is largely of a quantitative nature. It is to be hoped that three years hence the qualitative aspects of our work may be given more adequate emphasis.

We recognize the urgency of the task before us in the following areas:

1. The need to prepare common language translations in the major languages of the world.
2. The need to close the "translations consultant gap".
3. The need to train translators in the theory and practice of translation.
4. The need to prepare indigenous translators, particularly in areas where such translators have had limited educational backgrounds.
5. The need for advanced training programs.
6. The need to explain our methods and aims to Bible Society colleagues and to work in closer union with them.
7. The need to evaluate our work by establishing a set of guide-lines which will enable us to look critically at each language budget, assess its worth and thereby be able to invest our time, talents and money in the most effective manner.
8. The need to work effectively in interconfessional projects.
9. The need to organize our work to fit into the larger framework of regionalization.
10. The need to establish more accurate budgeting and accounting procedures.
11. The need to prepare published "Helps" which a translator can continue to consult after the consultant has gone on and the translators' seminar or institute has ended.

The above special needs will now be considered individually:

1. The need to prepare common language translations in major world languages.

There are perhaps 4,000 languages in the world, but nearly 95% of the world's population speaks a mere 100 languages, and 90% speaks only about 50 languages. At the present time the United Bible Societies are attempting to produce common language translations in the following languages of Asia: Arabic, Bengali, Cambodian, Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Lao, Marathi, Panjabi, Persian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, and Vietnamese. These 15 languages represent approximately 1 billion four hundred million speakers, or just under half the world's population. Major European languages in which

common language translations are being produced, or have been completed, are Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. If we add these 8 European languages to the 15 Asian languages, the 23 languages would represent between 65 and 70% of the world's population. A further 27 languages would bring the total to 50, or 90% of the world's population. The United Bible Societies, moreover, are not working in merely 50 languages, but rather are involved in more than 550 languages. The details of these projects may be seen in the Annual UBS Translations Progress Report.

We are frequently concerned about the differences in distribution in Africa and Asia. It should be pointed out that in Asia there are over 60 languages with a million or more speakers. In Africa, on the other hand, there are less than 30 languages with a million or more speakers. In Asia many of these larger languages have a very ancient literary tradition and well-developed educational systems, making it thereby necessary to produce common language translations so that the message of the Scriptures may also be accessible to those who have not had the advantage of education. In Africa very few of the languages have had any kind of written literary tradition or have been used in more than primary education. Nevertheless, the translation work in Africa is proceeding at a good pace and by 1974, 27 New Testaments will be completed, most of them fresh translations, in languages in which for the first time the entire New Testament will have been translated. There will be five Old Testaments appearing for the first time and four complete new Bibles.

2. The need to close the "translations consultant gap".

In Africa in 1969 there were eight expatriate translations consultants and no persons native to that region. In 1972 we had still eight expatriates (having lost one European and having gained another) but there were also four persons native to the region. Three of these are presently engaged in translation projects, but will be taking up translations consultant responsibilities as soon as their translations are completed in 1973. Three persons have been evaluated in translators' institutes and have been found to be unsatisfactory. One person has withdrawn during his two-year period of internship. The translation work in Africa has since 1969 been under the leadership of Dr. Heber Peacock, who has given outstanding leadership and has been asked by the Africa Regional Translations Consultation to continue for another three-year term.

In Asia in 1969 there was one UBS translations consultant (Dr. William Smalley) as well as three national translation secretaries (Australia, India and Indonesia). There were in addition four translations consultant trainees. The only persons native to the region were the three translation secretaries. In 1972 there were six UBS translations consultants and nine translations consultant trainees. Moreover, nine persons are now native to the region. In addition there are seven honorary translations advisors. These persons are not employees of the Bible Societies but rather individuals who have been approved on the basis of their experience and capacity to assist the Bible Societies in language project consultations. We regret very much that Dr. Smalley's illness has forced him to withdraw from leadership in the Asia Regional

Translations Consultation, and express deepest appreciation for the significant contribution he has made in the Asia-Pacific Region since 1969. His place for the next three years will be taken by Dr. James Moorhead.

In Europe in 1969 the World Translations Coordinator attempted to maintain contact with a limited number of European languages and called upon the services of translations personnel resident in that region. This situation has been greatly improved through the appointment of the Rev. Paul Ellingworth as Regional Translations Coordinator for Europe. He is assisted by the Rev. Rudolf Kassühlke, the Rev. Jean-Claude Margot, the Rev. Canon R. W. F. Wootton and Dr. Jan de Waard. In 1969 contact was maintained with some 10-15 languages. In 1972 the translations team in Europe was working in cooperation with some 53 language projects.

In the Americas in 1969 there were two translations consultants, Dr. Jacob Loewen and Dr. William Wonderly. Dr. Loewen has been transferred to Central Africa and Dr. Wonderly is now assisted by UBS Translations Advisor Mr. Alfredo Tepox who is devoting the major part of his time to the translation of the Old Testament in the Popular Spanish Version.

There have been two retirements since 1969—the Rev. Wilfred Bradnock, Translations Secretary for the BFBS, and the Rev. Harold K. Moulton, BFBS New Testament Advisor.

By way of summary, in 1969 the fulltime translations consultant staff consisted of 20 persons. In 1972 this figure had risen to 32, plus 6 home-based specialists whom we may call upon as the need arises.

3. The need to train translators in the theory and practice of translation.

The training of translators takes place through personal visits to translators and translation committees, meeting with small groups of translators in several languages and in larger institutes of four weeks' duration attended by 40 to 100 translators. Since 1969, major programs have been held in Africa in the following countries: Ivory Coast, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Upper Volta and Zaïre. Major programs held in the Asia-Pacific Region since 1969: Australia, Egypt, Fiji, India, Iran, Israel, New Guinea, Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand. In Europe a training program was held in East Germany for East European translators. There were two shorter programs in Yugoslavia and one in Portugal which included Catalán, Portuguese, and continental Spanish. In the Americas a major program was held in Central America and Canada. In all, over 25 training institutes have been attended by approximately 1,000 translators, including Roman Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants. These institutes have been staffed largely by personnel from the respective regions.

There are plans for consultations with seminary professors in Asia, and a recent consultation with European scholars was held in Stuttgart, Germany. The purpose of such consultations is to give seminary professors an opportunity to understand the aims and methods of the UBS translations program, and in particular to communicate through them to students who are prospective translators. We are also anxious to obtain technical cooperation from scholars in the preparation of Helps for translators.

4. The need to prepare indigenous translators, particularly in areas where they have had limited educational backgrounds.

Special materials are being prepared to assist persons with limited education to translate into their own languages—the smaller languages spoken in Africa, Australia, New Guinea, South America and South West Pacific.

5. Advanced Training Programs

It has been necessary in some areas to bring translators together for an advanced course in biblical backgrounds, semantics and the theory of translation. In some cases this has required conducting courses on two levels, and has meant an increased number of staff to cope with the complexity of the program. Successful experiments have been conducted in team teaching of biblical backgrounds, exegetical problems and translation, particularly where translators have a specialized background in these subjects.

6. Consultations with Bible Society colleagues

Between 1969 and 1971 Bible Society Secretaries' consultations were held in all four regions. During these consultations, translations personnel were given an opportunity to present the basic procedures used by the translations personnel. These included both administrative and technical aspects of translations and afforded both secretaries and translations personnel an opportunity to exchange ideas and to receive information from each other. It has been essential to establish a more effective flow of information between translations and distribution personnel, particularly to inform national secretaries and the Regional Centre regarding the estimated time when projects will be completed. This is now done through the Budget preparations and through the use of the "New Publications Form".

Since 1969 the various translations progress reports formerly issued by individual Bible Societies have been prepared at the World Translations Coordinator's headquarters and provide all Bible Societies with a World Translations Progress Report at 31 October each year.

7. Evaluation of Translation Work

There has been the need to determine a priority system to assist translations personnel in the selection of translation projects which should be given high priority. Various attempts have been made during the past three years to set up a scheme of priorities in translations. Certain basic criteria have operated, for the most part to determine whether a project was of high, medium or low priority. These criteria include the kind of translation—giving priority to common language translations—, the potential distribution of the finished translation, the opportunity for evangelization in the particular language, the kind and quality of supervision by translations personnel, the number of translators involved in the project, their selection and their training, the principles and procedures which guide the translation project and the amount of pay and number of persons who are being paid in the translation project. While it has been difficult to obtain agreement among all translations personnel as to the weighting of these various criteria, the setting up of a set

of priorities has helped to establish basically a method which will allow us to arrive at an evaluation for each project and to do this in cooperation with other aspects of Bible Society work.

8. Interconfessional Translation Projects

The progress in interconfessional projects continues to be good in most areas. Roman Catholic financial participation, however, has been disappointing. The statement in the guiding principles on interconfessional projects has, at one point, caused some problems in that it is generally recognized that an equal number of Roman Catholics and Protestants is often not possible. Both the Roman Catholic authorities and the United Bible Societies agree that it is extremely desirable that the most capable team be given the responsibility for the translation work, and that their selection should be based upon their ability; thus an equal number of Protestant and Catholic translators need not always be insisted upon.

9. Regionalization

In 1969 four regional translations consultations led by four regional translations coordinators were established. In Europe this body was called the European Advisory Translations Committee (EATC) and was advisory to the Translations Administrative Centres in London and Amsterdam (UTACs). However, under full regionalization, London, Amsterdam and New York gave way to the Regional Translations Consultations. In Europe this body is now called the Europe Regional Translations Committee and is made up of a committee of non-staff personnel drawn from the region. In Asia, Africa and the Americas non-staff committee members have not been brought into the consultation, due to the very great expense that would be involved in transportation.

The UBS Sub-Committee on Translations in 1969 consisted of the Translations Secretaries of the Bible Society of India, the American Bible Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society and the Netherlands Bible Society. That same year, following full regionalization, the membership of the UBS Sub-Committee on Translations was modified in order to represent the new regional structure. It was changed to consist of the four Regional Translations Coordinators, the UBS Translations Research Coordinator, two members at large, and the secretary—the World Translations Coordinator. In 1971 the UBS Executive appointed one of its members, the Rev. Birger Mathisen, and the Rev. Ulrich Fick to the UBS Sub-Committee on Translations.

10. Budgeting and Accounting

In 1969 translations were beginning to budget on a regional basis, and in a short while it was necessary for the World Budget Coordinator to draw up a set of procedures for budgeting in translations as well as a set of forms to be used. The initial system became somewhat complicated and was simplified in 1970. In order to obtain better information concerning translation

expenditure, the Translations Budget Accountant Centre (T-BAC) was set up in New York.

Between 1969 and 1972 translations budgets rose by nearly 60%. In terms of the entire World Service Budget, translations were spending 11.2% in 1969 and 15.2% in 1972. This represents a sharper rise than had been allowed in the other four parts of the World Service Budget. According to the projected calculations of the UBS Treasurers, translations will not continue to grow at more than a very modest rate over the next four years, a growth in fact which will barely keep abreast with inflation. We hope, however, that special opportunities in translations will be allowed through the new opportunities budget.

11. Helps for Translators

Since 1969 we have published *The Bible Index*, *The UBS Greek New Testament with Lexicon*, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, and *A Translator's Handbook on Luke*. The following are in press: *A Translator's Handbook on Acts*, *A Translator's Handbook on the Johannine Epistles*, and *A Translator's Handbook on Romans*.

In 1972 *The Bible Translator* was converted into two new series—a technical series (issues 1 and 3, January and July) intended primarily for the publication of articles of a technical nature; and a practical series (issues 2 and 4, April and October), appearing in a new red cover, for the publication of articles of a more practical nature.

In 1970 a new position was created: UBS Translations Research Co-ordinator. Dr. Eugene A. Nida was appointed to this task. His responsibility as Translations Research Co-ordinator is to coordinate the overall preparation of Helps for Translators, and in this capacity he works in cooperation with the Sub-Committee on Helps.

A very extensive range of Helps for Translators is in course of preparation or is being planned. The growing series of Translators' Handbooks will soon include *Ruth*, *John*, *Philippians*, *Galatians*, and other books. Of particular interest to Old Testament translators is the preparation of a special Help on problematic passages, in which some 3,000 passages are being evaluated in order to assist translators in making choices toward the best possible renderings. The Old Testament Textual Committee has met for three consecutive summers and it is hoped that they will be able to complete their work in about three more years. The result of their work will not be to produce a new edition of the Hebrew text, but rather to provide several books of both a practical and technical nature.

Of significant interest is the preparation of a *Greek New Testament Wordbook* for translators under the direction of the UBS Sub-Committee on Helps. Professor Johannes P. Louw, Dr. Eugene A. Nida and Professor Rondal B. Smith have succeeded in classifying approximately 15,000 different meanings in 700 basic semantic domains. The purpose of this Wordbook is to provide translators with a more usable tool based upon lexicographical principles and procedures which will produce more accurate information concerning the meanings of Greek terms and their relations to each other than has ever been done in any other Greek dictionary. It is estimated that it will take approximately five years to complete this project.