which has done a full job of restructuring the original text in plain idiomatic English. Each translation has to do its own restructuring of the linguistic components of the text, according to the genius of its language. This restructuring is not transferable from language to language. For instance, TEV makes a liberal use of the passive, which is quite congenial to English but which would be most awkward in South Indian languages. One may also ask whether the secularized homely style of modern English should set the pattern for an Indian formulation of the Word of God? But this is another question that would take us too far.

The first request is to the translators. Could they find it possible to publish a Translators' Commentary that would give us the fruit of their deliberations: explanation of the choice they made of variant readings, of interpretations, of formulations? This would be of great help to translators and would also interest exegetes. It is true that the UBS is already publishing a set of Translator's Handbooks. But here we could see the method applied *in vivo*.

The second request is to the publishers. May we hope to have as soon as possible an edition of TEV "with Apocrypha", like the NEB, and thus see the *opus magnum* brought to completion?[4]

Finally, a question. Is the translation suitable for liturgical use? For the psalms, I doubt it. For the rest, I do not know. In their preface, the translators do not mention that they have taken into account the special requirements of public reading. Only practice will show whether the present translation manages to get across in public reading or whether we are still to wait for another translation to set us free from the bondage of RSV and JB, both of which are equally widespread in lectionaries and equally inadequate for public reading.

[4] A TEV translation of the deutero-canonical books is in preparation (*Ed.*).

J. M. ROSS

# PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION IN MATTHEW

**Mr. J. M. Ross** is a classical scholar, and chairman of the British and Foreign Bible Society's Translations Advisory Group.

Translators will be grateful to Dr Philipose for his article in the July 1977 issue (pp. 312–26) in which he courageously tackles some difficulties in the First Gospel that are often unrecognized. Not all his solutions, however, can be accepted as final.

For instance the translation suggested for Matthew 5.1–2 (page 317) is not an accurate rendering of the Greek text. What the Greek says is that Jesus, seeing the crowds, went up a hill (apparently to escape from them, not to teach them). When he had climbed the hill he sat down (as a teacher would) and his disciples (who had no doubt followed him up the hill) gathered round him, Jesus then began to teach them (the disciples, not the crowds). It falsifies the text to say that Jesus went up the hill to teach the crowds and his disciples also went up there. It is for the commentator, not the translator, to reconcile

this passage with 7.28–9, which implies that the crowds had been listening to Jesus's discourse. We may suppose either that crowds followed the disciples up the hill and listened in to what Jesus was telling them, or that by the time Matthew had got to the end of chapter 7 he had forgotten what he had written three chapters earlier. Certainly the discourse down to 5.18, and the Lord's Prayer (6.9–13) seem more appropriate to the inner circle of disciples.

The translation suggested for Matt. 5.17–18 (page 318) likewise fails to render the force of the Greek. The text does not say, weakly, that the Scriptures "will have their value till the end of the world", but that the law will remain in force to the smallest detail until everything that has to happen shall have come to pass (or, so that the purpose of the law shall be wholly achieved). TEV here is precisely accurate. Here also it is for the commentator, not the translator, to explain this extreme statement. Bultmann thought it was never made by Jesus but was attributed to him by Jewish Christians. Others have thought that Jesus was here repeating a well-known rabbinical saying about the eternity of the law, but with a new meaning—it was the law as transformed by his teaching and symbolically applied to himself that was to hold good in every detail till the end of time. It is easier to account for apparent conflicts between different parts of the Sermon on the Mount if we regard it as put together from sayings originally uttered on different occasions and in different contexts.

Another mistranslation is suggested on pp. 321–22. The word *ethnikos*, usually translated "pagan" or "heathen" at Matt. 6.7,32 and 18.17, simply means in the New Testament anyone who is not a Jew. It does not, as Dr Philipose suggests, mean a person who does not know God. If that had been what Matthew meant, he would have used other words, such we find at Eph. 2.12. We must not arbitrarily rule out the possibility that the Lord Jesus could have sometimes accepted the Jewish assumption that their religion was superior to all others. He is for instance recorded as having assumed the superiority of the Jews in his conversations with the Syrophoenician woman at Mark 7.27 and the Samaritan woman at John 4.22.

We must not be tempted into using "dynamic equivalence" as a pretext for replacing what the Greek text says by what we think it ought to have meant.

Opinions will doubtless continue to differ on how far inconsistencies in Matthew's redactional work are real or apparent. Dr. Philipose comments: "My primary concern was to do some thinking aloud on the problem of translation the passage in question into languages whose socio-cultural backgrounds are far removed from that of Matthew or his readers". Editor.