comprehensive discourse analysis of the original, coupled with a natural, functionally-equivalent "re-structuring" in the RL (including the format of the printed page),[1] can be transmitted with greater intelligibility to a listening community.

The second way of achieving such compositional relevance (already intimated in the preceding) is to utilize a RL literary (oral/written) genre that will most closely match the biblical passage in terms of its intended purpose, content, sociocultural context, and religious significance.[2] Certainly, as Gutt properly emphasizes, the expectations, needs, and concerns of the receptor constituency (both present and future) also need to be taken into serious consideration in such a more "dynamic" enterprise, where a much higher proportion of indigenous rhetorical-poetic forms are used.[3] This is especially important in situations where people have become accustomed to the literal style of an existing version, either in the RL itself or some major trade language. Indeed, a certain amount of experimenting coupled with explanation will be necessary to point out, for example, that the idiomatic rendering is not intended to replace a formally more correspondent version. It rather seeks to complement the older translation as a means of manifesting to people today more of the overall "relevance" of the Scriptures—that is, to augment their understanding of the Word on its own terms first of all and also to increase their appreciation for the artistic and rhetorical nature of the biblical text itself. But secondly, the aim is to sharpen their awareness of the Bible's indispensable significance for their own lives, times, and circumstances.

L. RONALD ROSS

BRIEF NOTE ON FORM AND MEANING

The author is a UBS Translation Consultant based in San José, Costa Rica.

Anyone engaged in the enterprise of Bible translation knows well that it is often necessary to alter the structure of the source text to preserve its meaning in the receptor language. This issue receives abundant attention in every manual on translation and confronts us daily in our work. However, even though we expect structural changes, occasionally their implications can be surprising, even distressing, particularly when the structure of the source text carries significant pragmatic meaning that seems to fall by the wayside in the translation.

Some time ago I was checking the 15th chapter of the book of Acts in the Bribri language, spoken in southern Costa Rica. In 15.12, according to the Greek, Paul and Barnabas were relating to the congregation the miracles God had wrought *through them* among the Gentiles:

esigēsen de pan to plēthos, kai ēkouon Barnaba kai Paulou exēgoumenōn hosa epoiēsen ho theos sēmeia kai terata en tois ethnesin di' autōn.

1 For some suggestions with regard to some of these issues, see J.P. Louw and E.R. Wendland, *Graphic Design and Bible Reading: Exploratory Studies in the Typographical Representation of the Text of Scripture in Translation*, Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa 1993, ch 4.

2 For a detailed report of some initial experimentation in this area, see E.R. Wendland, *Comparative Discourse Analysis and the Translation of Psalm 22 in Chichewa, a Bantu Language of South-Central Africa*, Lewiston NY: Mellen 1993.

3 G 1992, 69-75.

In terminology currently in use by functional typologists, one would say that in this passage "God" is the agent and that "Barnabas and Paul" are the associates. T. Givón[1] defines agent as "the deliberate initiator of events" and associate as "co-agent or co-dative that is outside the focus of importance" (emphasis mine). Givón goes on to say, regarding the associate, that it is "one who performs the action together with the subject agent, though in some sense in a less focal, subservient role." Typically the agent is the subject of the verb and the associates are in an oblique case. So God would be the deliberate initiator of the working of signs and wonders, and Paul and Barnabas the co-agents, participating in the action but outside the focus of importance. And this is as it should be, given the context of the passage.

However in the Bribri text the roles had been switched. It was now Barnabas and Paul who had worked miracles "through God".[2] That is, the translation seemed to have *de*moted God from the position of primary or subject agent to that of associate, outside the focus of importance, while Paul and Barnabas have been *pro*moted to the position of primary agents, or "deliberate initiators of the events", squarely within the focus of importance.

When I pointed the problem out to the translators and suggested they reverse the roles in Bribri to restore the semantic structure of the source text, they contended that to do so would make God appear the weaker partner. To say that God did signs and wonders through (i.e. with the help of) men would suggest disbelief in his divine faculty to work miracles unassisted. However, to reverse the role structure and say "we worked many miracles through God" conveys inability on the part of the men, who therefore have to rely on the power of God.

It goes without saying that God should remain the stronger partner, but it troubled me that this had been done at the expense of his primary agenthood. Clearly God was the deliberate initiator of the signs and wonders. Indeed, Barnabas and Paul are attempting to convince their Jewish audience that God intended the gospel message also for non-Jews by recounting to them what *he*, not *they*, had been doing among the Gentiles. If the reversal of roles makes Barnabas and Paul the deliberate initiators of the events, it renders their argument less convincing.

I have suggested the passage be translated: "... telling them about the signs and wonders that God helped them do among the Gentiles." This solution keeps God as the stronger partner, since the men clearly required his assistance. But it also maintains God's position of primary agent by making "God" the subject of the main verb and keeping him firmly in focus.

1 Talmy Givón, *Syntax: A Functional-Typological Introduction*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins 1984, 124.
2 The Bribri word *batamik* literally means "with the help of."