

INTRODUCTION

The reader may rightly wonder why the United Bible Societies should publish a "Translator's Handbook," when there are so many excellent commentaries available on all the books of the Bible. Why are these commentaries not sufficient? How can a "Translator's Handbook" possibly differ sufficiently from them so as to warrant an additional publication of this nature?

In the first place we must emphasize the fact that the present volume is not designed to take the place of commentaries, not even for the translator. Commentaries are indispensable for any translator who is going to do justice to his work. There are, however, some essential differences between this volume and commentaries, and in order that the special relevance of this and the volumes of the Handbook series which are to follow may be more fully understood, we need to examine briefly some of these differences.

For the average translator commentaries tend to present something of a problem, for they often contain a great deal of material which seems irrelevant to his task, such as expository insights, homiletical suggestions, and historical developments in theology and doctrine. At times it is difficult to see the exegetical trees because of the homiletical forest. Many of these matters, of course, which may at first appear somewhat marginal to the translator's immediate task, are nevertheless important to his ultimate work, but if he is to appreciate them fully they need to be presented in such a way as to indicate clearly their particular significance to the task of translating. At the same time, not only do writers of commentaries present a vast variety of information, since they are attempting to write for an audience of widely different backgrounds and interests, but more often than not they tend to have certain special points of view which they try to promulgate or defend, sometimes to the neglect of other orientations or possibilities of interpretation. If the translator, however, is to do his work well, he must have guidance as to the relevance of the background data, and he needs to be shown the entire range of possible interpretations and, whenever possible, the particular exegesis which reflects the majority view of scholarly opinion.

In addition, however, to an introduction to the problem of the meaning

of the Greek, any translator who is working in a language which is outside the Indo-European family of languages will need to have help on just how the various interpretations, as may exist in the Greek, can be adequately rendered in some other language. For these problems the commentaries are relatively useless, for there is no real need and, consequently, little attempt to explore these difficulties. In English, for example, the explanation that the Greek term for "repent" means "to change the mind" offers little difficulty to the reader. In many languages, however, "to change the mind" means merely "to change one's opinion," which is a far cry from the radical change envisaged by the original Greek term. It is necessary, therefore, to add that the meaning of "repent" in Kekchi, a language of Guatemala, is brought out by the phrase "it pains my heart;" in Baouli, of the Ivory Coast, "it hurts so much I want to quit" is the proper equivalent; in Northern Sotho, of South Africa, one must say "it becomes untwisted," and in Tzeltal, of Mexico, the correct expression is "my heart returns because of my sin." The idiom "to beat the breast" needs no explanation for English readers, but translators working in many of the languages of Africa need to be warned that this idiom, when literally translated, may mean "to congratulate oneself" (the equivalent to the English "pat oneself on the back"). Similarly, there are problems of cultural contrasts which need to be brought to a translator's attention, or the resulting translation may be utterly meaningless or entirely misleading.

Perhaps the most serious obvious problem for translators is the fact that many languages have obligatory categories which simply do not exist in Greek. For example, there may be two types of first person plural pronouns, inclusive and exclusive, resulting in a number of translation problems. Even more frustrating are the honorifics which exist in many languages of India and other countries of Southeast Asia, where in both the choice of words and grammatical forms one must attempt to indicate the relative social position of the participants in any communicative event.

On the other hand, these difficulties of lexicon, involving the meanings of words, idioms, and categories, though very striking are not so complex as those which involve syntax. For example, many of the long sentences of Greek must be broken up into more understandable units, the involved Greek hypotaxis must be rendered into the parataxis of many indigenous tongues, and the numerous transitional particles, which are the symbol of Greek grammatical elegance, must be radically altered if an equivalent message is to be communicated in another language.

It is quite understandable why such problems are not treated in commentaries, for many of these lexical and syntactic difficulties do not occur in translating Greek into English and other European languages. With respect to syntax and accident these modern languages are quite similar to Koiné Greek, and a commentary written in one of these languages will not deal with problems which appear at every step to a translator working in another language. Some problems, of course, do appear even in modern European languages, such as the precise equivalent of the Greek aorist; and an exegetical commentary will deal adequately with these problems. It is only when we confront the problems of interpretation in quite different languages spoken by people having very diverse cultures that we come face to face with many and unusually acute difficulties.

In order to meet the particular needs of the average Bible translator working in any one of the hundreds of tongues in which work is now in process, this volume has been specially designed in what are essentially two parts: the first, dealing with textual notes, punctuation, and exegesis, written by Robert G. Bratcher, and the second, treating the ways in which the various meanings may be translated into other languages, prepared by Eugene A. Nida. Though it has been quite impossible to be exhaustive in the handling of either the exegetical or translational phase, the authors, with the generous help of many translators and colleagues, have endeavored at least to suggest something of the range of difficulties and the nature of some of the more satisfactory solutions.

Though textual problems cannot, of course, be treated in anything like a comprehensive manner, it is felt that the translator should be aware of some of the textual problems in connection with the Greek text he is translating. The textual notes, however, make reference only to the most important printed editions of the Greek text, and very rarely to the original manuscripts and early versions of the New Testament.

Due to the still widespread use of the *Textus Receptus* (the text underlying the King James version, 1611, and many other major versions), it was felt that the translator should see for himself, in a convenient form, the *Textus Receptus* readings which are today rejected by most, if not by all, major critical Greek texts. Accordingly, where significant meaning is involved, most variants of the *Textus Receptus* have been duly noted.¹

¹ It may be useful to notice here, briefly, the genesis and nature of the *Textus Receptus*. The first printed Greek New Testament to be published was edited by Erasmus in 1516. At the instigation of Froben, a Basle publisher, Erasmus hurriedly prepared a text in order to get it published before the publication of the Greek text of the Complutensian Polyglot. Erasmus used very few Greek manu-

It is clear that the brief textual notes given in this Handbook are designed simply to inform the translator concerning textual problems and allow him to ascertain the position of the most important modern critical Greek texts with regard to disputed readings.

scripts in preparing his text, none of which was older than the 10th century and some of which were as late as the 16th century. His principal manuscript for the Gospels was from the 15th century; for the Acts and Epistles, the 13th or 14th century; and for Revelation he had only one manuscript, of the 12th century. Since this manuscript lacked the last six verses Erasmus translated these verses from the Latin into Greek and incorporated them into his text. Further editions of his New Testament were published in 1519, 1522, 1527 and 1535.

The Parisian publisher Robert Estienne (latinized as Stephanus), and his son Henri, in 1546 published the Greek New Testament, largely reproducing Erasmus' text; further editions followed in 1549, 1550, and 1551. This last edition, published in Paris, was the one into which Estienne introduced the verse division of the text, followed to this day.

Theodore Beza, of Geneva, from 1565 to 1611 published several editions of the Greek New Testament, based mainly on the 4th edition of Stephanus.

The Elzevir brothers of Leyden, Bonaventure and Abraham, in 1624 published their first edition, following closely Beza's text. Their second edition of 1633 had a typical publisher's "blurb" which, however, had effects far more widespread and deleterious than most advertisements. The editors said of their edition: *Textum ergo habes nunc ab omnibus receptum, in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus* ("The text, therefore, you now have is accepted by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupt"). This edition was to become the famous *Textus Receptus*, the basis of nearly all major translations of the New Testament through the 19th century. (In England the *Textus Receptus* is Stephanus' 3rd edition of 1550, practically identical with the Elzevir edition of 1633; according to one calculation there are only 287 differences between them).

The *Textus Receptus*, then, is a late and corrupt edition of the Greek New Testament, based on inferior manuscripts. It contains many changes that scribes introduced into the text throughout the centuries in which manuscripts were copied by hand, changes which are now known to be spurious as we compare the late manuscripts with earlier ones. Although some older and more reliable manuscripts were available at that time, most editors were content simply to reproduce Erasmus' work, with minor alterations based on the Complutensian edition and some other Greek manuscripts.

Following the work of Mill, Bentley, Bengel, Griesbach, Lachmann, Tregelles, Tischendorf, Hort, Westcott, Weiss, and other scholars, the present editions of the Greek New Testament—of which the most widely used are the Nestle editions—are based upon much older and much more reliable Greek manuscripts, such as the uncials Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus, and the papyri manuscripts such as the Chester Beatty and Bodmer collections, to name only a few. These date from the 5th back to the 2nd centuries, and enable the modern editor of the Greek New Testament to prepare a text much older and more accurate than the *Textus Receptus*. The early versions and patristic citations also provide a wealth of evidence for the reconstruction of the original text.

Translations of these Greek New Testaments, therefore, are in fact much "older" New Testaments than the translations of the *Textus Receptus*, such as the King James Version of 1611.

As is well known, all punctuation is the work of editors, since the Greek manuscripts themselves are devoid of punctuation. In most cases editors are agreed; where, however, differences of opinion arise affecting the meaning of the Greek text, notice is taken of the various ways in which the text is punctuated (cf. 1:1, 8:18).

The exegetical notes are meant to make clear the meaning of the text, in terms of the translator's problems and needs. Consequently, as noted above, matters of derived theological or doctrinal import are rarely, if ever, touched upon. Abundant use is made of grammars, lexicons, and commentaries. The Lexicon of Bauer, as translated by Arndt and Gingrich, is quoted at almost every step, in the hope that every translator will constantly avail himself of this invaluable tool or its equivalent in other languages.

Where there are grounds for different meanings in a given verse or sentence, the attempt is made to set forth these different valid interpretations; sometimes preference is given to one over other interpretations, and at times no preference is expressed. Ancient versions and major modern translations in European languages have been consulted at every step.

Commentaries are referred to by the name of the author alone, as well as grammars and lexicons (cf. Bibliography); Greek texts are cited by the name of their editor (cf. Bibliography), while translations are referred to either by conventional abbreviations (AV, *Authorized Version*, 1611; ERV, *English Revised Version*, 1881; ASV, *American Standard Version*, 1901; RSV, *Revised Standard Version*, 1946), or by the name of the translator. The English text quoted in this commentary is that of the Revised Standard Version (1946)¹ used by permission of the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Though the RSV is employed as a "running text" preceding the discussion of each section (usually individual verses), the exegetical section is not based on the RSV, but on the Greek text itself, usually the Nestle 24th edition. The Greek is given, however, in transliterated form, for it is recognized that many Bible translators, especially those working in so-called "primitive languages," do not have a ready working knowledge of Greek. On the other hand, the citation of the Greek forms provides a much more satisfactory basis for explanation and can be of real usefulness to translators who may wish to use concordances or wordbooks having transliterated forms. At the same time, translators who are familiar with Greek can readily adjust

¹ Edition of 1960.

themselves to the use of transliteration, even though this may seem somewhat awkward at first.

The Greek expressions are cited in terms of primary and secondary levels of comments, with two steps of indentation. The primary level, which often includes an entire phrase, is given in the grammatical forms of the Greek text, while the secondary comments, which are largely lexical, are cited in their traditional lexical forms so as to facilitate use of lexicons.

One important feature of the lexical discussions is the fact that except for very common terms, each word is followed at its first point of occurrence by a list of all passages in which it is to be found in the book of Mark. This provides the translator with a kind of built-in concordance for these key words.

No attempt has been made to cite the full range of scholarly works which might be noted as supporting or opposing certain interpretations. However, in most instances of significant differences of opinion a number of authorities are noted, not only as means of indicating to the reader the extent of the scholarly support for the position in question, but also as a way of guiding the translator to sources of fuller information on such points.

There are, of course, numerous interesting lexical and grammatical points which are not touched, simply because they do not seem to be specifically related to serious translational problems.

In the sections of the Handbook identified as *Translation*, there are essentially two different types of problems: lexical and syntactic, but these are not treated separately since so often they are interrelated. For example, an equivalent expression for "love" may involve not only the mention of a psychological focus of the personality, e.g. the liver, spleen, abdomen, throat, etc., but also the fact that such an expression must be cast as a verbal, rather than as a nominal phrase. The range of translation difficulties for any given passage is only illustrative, for one simply could not, nor need not, introduce constantly all the types of problems that would occur where languages differ radically in such categories as aspect, voice, number, gender, distance, participation, viewpoint, source of information, etc. We have, however, tried to cite a sufficient range of difficulties as to warn the translator of the problems which he is likely to encounter.

The selection of problems for the translational section has not depended, however, upon our having had some illustrative data on the problem in question. Rather, these difficulties are treated because they

are recognized as involving (1) features of grammar which are known to require reorganization of form because of the structural complexities involved or the lack of ready correspondences between languages, and (2) features of meaning which tend not to have direct equivalents in other languages due to differences of word classes, cultural backgrounds, figurative extensions of meaning, and/or levels of generic or abstract usage. The citations of renderings in various languages are incorporated in order to illustrate the diversity of usage and to suggest possible alternatives. They are certainly not to be conceived as prescriptive models, nor do they delimit the range of the problems considered. In other words, the analysis of the semantic problems is not restricted to available illustrations.

The data which are cited in the section under *Translation* are drawn from a number of sources, including principally: (1) *The Bible Translator*, which during the last ten years has included a wide variety of translational problems and solutions; (2) the field notes of Eugene A. Nida and his colleagues, who have checked translations in over one hundred and fifty languages; (3) correspondence from translators in the field, who have sent in their difficulties and solutions; (4) results of translators' conferences (including especially the Djakarta Translators' Conference in 1952, sponsored by the Netherlands Bible Society and the Indonesian Bible Society, and the yearly Translators' Conference in Guatemala); and (5) the generous assistance of Dr. van der Veen, of the Netherlands Bible Society, who supplied a number of examples of translations in various Indonesian languages.

Despite, however, a file of some 25,000 different translational problems and solutions, which constituted the major source of the data cited in the translation section, it is fully recognized that this is by no means exhaustive. It is hoped, however, that this source will grow as more translators are willing to share their problems and solutions with others.

When citing a rendering which is misleading or incorrect, we have purposely not indicated the language. There is no need to engage in such unnecessary criticism, since the name of the language is not essential to an understanding of the problem. Where there are commendable translations, however, we have consistently tried to indicate the language, wherever this is known to us, for it is felt that credit should go where credit is due. In a number of instances, however, the notes which we have made of translation problems and solutions reflect not a final but an evolving stage of the work, and hence the translators working in these languages may have in the meantime modified their renderings or

adopted quite different forms of expression. It has not been possible, of course, to revalidate all of these details, but the authors will certainly welcome correspondence from translators whose data are cited here and who may have now found still more satisfactory solutions.

Though the major thrust of this Handbook is admittedly in the direction of Bible translators working in languages which are outside of the Indo-European family and which reflect very different cultural backgrounds, nevertheless, translators working in Indo-European languages and in those with a long literary heritage will find much that is very useful for their study, since the basic principles and procedures of effective communication, which underlie good translation work in whatever language, have been carefully followed and generously illustrated.

No attempt has been made in this volume to provide an introduction to the theory of Bible translating. These problems have been fully dealt with from time to time in *The Bible Translator*, and are discussed in a general handbook, *Bible Translating* by Eugene A. Nida. One useful tool, referred to frequently in this volume, is *Mark, a Greek-English Diglot For the Use of Translators* (1958), published by the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Greek text of which has been edited by Prof. G. D. Kilpatrick, and the English text translated by a highly competent committee. For translators familiar with various languages in India, Hooper's *Indian Wordbook* is an important tool, though it does not contain discussions of the meaning of various words as they are used in different Indian languages.

In a very real sense it must be recognized that this volume is a "dependent" one, for it does not attempt any novel exegetical solutions nor does it presume to suggest translational equivalents which have not already been proven by experience. In this sense, therefore, it is a volume which must be dedicated to those who as scholars of the Greek text or as translators of it into other languages have provided the basic data of which the authors have only been collators. It is hoped, therefore, that the results may prove useful to the student who is seeking a useful guide to the exegesis of the Greek text, and most especially to the translator who can profit from the wide variety of solutions found by his fellow workers facing similar problems in other parts of the world.

United Bible Societies
Sub-Committee on Translation