

Book Reviews

***Translation as Mission:
Bible Translation in the Modern
Missionary Movement***
by W. A. Smalley
(Mercer Press: Georgia, 1991) pp.
xiv, 287.

No, the Bishop said, there had been no translation department in the Diocese* when he came in to office and he wasn't going to create one. If the young man wanted to translate the Scriptures, he could be released from his Church post and get on with it.

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From that location, right in the interior of Africa, hundreds of kilometers, thousands of kilometers in any direction, other leaders of the African Church hold similar opinions, sometimes voiced, sometimes seen only in their attitudes and plans for ministry.

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'But why did you put him into the translation project?' persisted the project leader.

'To strengthen the work.' was the simple reply. Their eyes met and held -- the eyes of the Translation Project Leader and those of the Diocesan* Churchman. The project leader's

showed incredulity -- the Churchman's cool firmness.

The man they were discussing had been in and out of trouble with the church for many years; in and out of church jobs too, as he had created much disharmony and contributed little else in whatever ministry he had been attached to. Even in and out of prison for belligerent behaviour and careless talk. Now, in a task which called for mature Christian character, spiritual insight, and good theological understanding, he was assigned to the Bible translation programme.

[* I have used the word 'Diocese' to indicate that the leaders in question were responsible for church administration over a wide area, and not to imply that these incidents are drawn from any single church community.]

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True stories -- yes. Made anonymous for the telling, but true nonetheless. Nor are they unique. Similar tales could be offered from north, south, east and west of this great continent.

But -- no, let's not overdo it. Africa has many fine Christian leaders, many fine translators. However, it is true that Bible translation is not a priority for many of the church's leaders. It is often not seen to be the church's ministry -- it

is the local Bible Society's responsibility or the western missionary's.

In spite of the fact that never before in the history of missions has such a stupendous effort been made to provide Scriptures in the vernacular as has been done in Africa, (Cf. D. Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa*, Oxford University Press: Nairobi, 1968:191), that early vision fizzled out. Translation in Africa began as a missionary effort, and has never been truly adopted into the African church's own mission.

Smalley's book *Translation as Mission* therefore addresses a fundamental issue that has been too long neglected. The responsibility for Bible translation rests squarely and firmly on the church in any culture. Translation of the word of God is part of the church's mission to the people under its care. Indeed, as he begins this volume, Smalley is able to claim that

Nothing has ever been translated as frequently, into as many languages, and over as long a span of time as the Bible, and so close is the identification of Bible with translation that for many people in the world their translated Bible is the Bible. It is God's word in KiKongo or Wuechua or Cantonese. (p. 1).

Smalley has provided us with 13 chapters, each of which deals with one aspect of the translation task.

The complexity of the task (Chapter 1) is followed by a sketch of how the ministry developed through the church era (Chapter 2) and a look at some of the outstanding translators of the last two hundred years and the major institutions serving the church in this ministry today -- the Bible Societies and the Summer Institute of Linguistics (Chapters 3 & 4). Nowadays a number of smaller organisations also contribute, including around ten translation agencies in various African nations.

These very readable introductory chapters are followed by discussion of theological assumptions and their relationship to translation (Chapter 5), and on modern understanding of the translation process, or what is often called *dynamic, or functional equivalence* (Chapters 6 & 7). The approach is sometimes maligned by the more conservative theologian, who unfortunately has usually little or no personal experience of translating into an African language. At heart, however, functional equivalence is a serious attempt to give high place to both the message of Scripture and the grammar and idioms of the language into which the translation is being made. The effort goes far beyond a simplistic attempt to match words and grammar, which,

Smalley is well aware, cannot hope to do justice to the message.

Problems of dialect and bilingualism are central to good planning (Chapter 8), while at the other end of the task lie outcomes, and these are no less important to consider: the influence of translation on the (Christian) community (Chapter 9), the seminal impact of translated Scriptures on what is called 'indigenous theology' (Chapter 10), the impact of new literature in a previously non-literate community (Chapter 11), and finally the impact of the translated word of God on communities around the world -- and the sad situation of communities without his word (Chapter 12).

The evidence is irresistible: translation is mission, and mission is dangerously incomplete if the translation question is neglected. The final chapter turns from the past to the future, and to the hoped for return of the task from the hands of 'missionaries' to the hands of the local church and its translators. For Smalley, the future of Pentecost lies to a significant degree in this task, and with such men and women.

For many years a Bible Society Translation Consultant, Smalley brings a wealth of practical experience plus the insight of missiological perspectives to his writing. He is a good story-teller, and the book is rich in anecdote which

lightens its content in an encouraging, and even exciting way without detracting from discussion of the issues. Smalley's comment on people and agencies pulls no punches, although his criticism is never unjust, and he avoids idolising the 'awkwardly obstinate' personalities (or agencies) of which Bible translation history is made up. At the same time, his careful appraisal will hopefully help bring to an end the kind of anecdotes with which we began. If college faculty and students take this book to heart, we may have a new generation of leaders in the African church who *do* see translation as an integral part of the church's mission.

Church history courses rarely have much to say about the place of translated Scripture in the expansion of the church, but as well as history courses, mission, evangelism, and contextualization studies could profitably include one or more chapters of this book as assigned reading.

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Internationalising Missionary Training

William David Taylor, Editor
Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1991
Grand Rapids: Baker Book House,
1991
XIV, 286 pages.

What are the best ways to train missionaries? What are the best ways to train them in the non-Western world? What can Western institutions learn about missionary training by studying the emerging non-Western training models? What can non-Western missionary training institutions learn from each other?

Internationalising Missionary Training probably offers the best resource currently available to answer these important questions. The book itself is "historic" in the words of its editor, Dr. Bill Taylor, Executive Secretary of the WEF Missions Commission. It is a compendium of essays and reports on missionary training in general with an emphasis on non-Western training in particular. The book emerged from a unique consultation on contemporary missionary training held in June 1989 in Metro Manila, Philippines. where 60 missionary leaders from 24 countries met for 4 days in the "Manila Consultation On Two-Thirds World

Training" to discuss the burning need for effective missionary training.

During this workshop, the participants evaluated and critiqued eight different missionary training models from Kenya, Nigeria, Brazil, India, Singapore, Korea, USA, and Britain. The reports which were written specifically for the publication of this book, are included in this unique one-volume contemporary resource on missionary training worldwide.

Important issues such as curriculum, training philosophy, culture and learning styles, contextualization, accreditation, training goals, appropriate technology and methods, missiological versus practical emphasis, holistic versus dichotomistic training environment, and many other significant questions are presented and discussed.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part, entitled "The Context Of Missionary Training," presents an appropriate perspective on the growing need for effective missionary training. In this section, Larry Pate, author of *From Every People: A Handbook Of Two-Thirds World Missions With Directory/Histories/Analysis* (Marc, 1989), offers a current overview of the phenomenal growth of two-thirds world mission agencies and missionaries over the past 15 years. Pate notes that "the two-thirds world mission movement has grown approximately five times faster

than the Western missions movement during the past 10 years." The implications of this growth for non-Western missionary training provide a fitting backdrop for the reports and essays in the book.

The second section of the book, "Models of Missionary Training," presents 11 different ways in which cross-cultural missionaries are being trained today. Most of these models are creative and innovative from the perspective of traditional Western education.

The third section, "Critical Education Considerations," sets forth six essays which deal with specific issues applicable to cross-cultural missionary training worldwide. Part four, "Conclusions," written by editor Bill Taylor, offers a challenge to interdependent cooperation through building networks among people and agencies involved in missionary training. The book concludes with a useful bibliography on missionary training, along with a series of helpful addresses.

The book is well presented, with an index which permits the reader to find the particular reports and essays in which he is interested. In addition, it is a valuable handbook on current missionary training, with a detailed description of a number of currently

functioning institutions, including important statistics about these schools.

For anyone involved in cross-cultural missionary training and/or new frontiers in theological education generally, this book offers a very current perspective on what is actually taking place around the world. Since two of the school reports in Part Two of the book are from institutions representing what is being done in both East and West Africa (Kenya and Nigeria), the book has particular usefulness to those involved in cross-cultural training programs and Christian education/theological ministries here in Africa.

Since some models of training in the non-Western world presented in the book will be judged highly innovative from a Western perspective, Christian educators in the West will also find a wealth of creative ideas with which to improve, change or renew their own involvement in theological or practical Christian education, beyond just missionary training. For those actually involved in missionary training, this book should be considered an essential resource handbook of ideas, facts, possibilities and expected results.

The library of any missionary training institution should consider this book an essential holding. In addition, it would be a useful addition to the libraries of both Western and

non-Western mission agencies, as well as to the libraries of most theological schools or Christian education ministries, in view of the creative ideas and insights presented in the various training models discussed. These insights could benefit a wide range of Christian education programs.

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SIM theological educator

***Introduction to Biblical
Christianity from an African
Perspective***

*by Wilbur O'Donovan, Jr.,
(Ilorin: Nigerian Evangelical
Fellowship, 1992) [order from: SIM
Literature Dept., P.O. Box 7900,
Charlotte, NC 28241, USA]
389 pages/\$5 (Africa), \$11
(elsewhere).*

O'Donovan states that, whereas there are many books on theology for use in European and North American theological schools, a great need continues to exist in Africa for theology textbooks written in plain English from an African perspective. This need O'Donovan attempts to meet. In this book, intended as a textbook for use in Africa, O'Donovan seeks to express the truths of the Bible in terms of the African situation, and to demonstrate

how to develop a Christian theology from an African perspective.

O'Donovan, who has served for more than 25 years in theological education in Nigeria, begins this book with certain basic questions and answers about worldview in general and about African worldview in particular. Some of the questions are: 1) What is the meaning of world view? 2) Is there really a general African Worldview? 3) How do we build a theology that is Biblical? 4) What problems have been encountered in trying to build a theology which is both Biblical and also African? 5) How can we overcome the problems of the past and build a theology which is truly Biblical and also truly African? These questions form the grid through which O'Donovan constructs an expression of Christian theology that is meant to be both acceptably Biblical and acceptably African.

The book is certainly well organized. Popular theological arguments are clearly presented in simple easy-to-read sentences. The case studies that precede each chapter and the questions that accompany them make the chapter content easy to understand, and provide the context for discussing the theological issues addressed in each chapter. This is not common to any North American or European theological textbook familiar to me.

For theology to be African, O'Donovan argues, it has to reflect certain elements within the African worldview. Such elements include "emphasis on life in community with others of the extended family and clan," "beliefs about relationships to the spirits of the ancestors," "the viewpoint that is taken toward the spirit world," higher regard for life and for the importance of people more than things," "[African] history of colonial rule and the experience of independence," "holistic view of life," "emphasis on events of life more than emphasis on schedules and clocks." O'Donovan implies that it is necessary for the African theologian to be aware of these basic tenets within the African worldview before he can do theology that is African (pp. 3,4).

For theology to be biblical, O'Donovan states that it must express "what the Bible teaches on a particular subject as one encounters that subject in various books of the Bible." To do this he advises that: (1) "We must carefully observe all that the Bible says on that subject in all places it is mentioned in the Bible." (2) We must determine the meaning of all statements concerning that subject. And (3) "We must apply the Bible teaching on the subject to life today."

In his treatment of the Holy Spirit, O'Donovan missed a tremendous opportunity to state the reason why the

Holy Spirit is called the *Holy Spirit*. There are other kinds of spirits in African culture. O'Donovan could have contributed to the understanding of the Holy Spirit in African Christianity if he had stated the differences between the Holy Spirit and the spirits in African traditional beliefs. Also, O'Donovan does not clearly distinguish how the Bible is different from the Koran and from African traditional religious beliefs. Study questions which he provides, comparing the Bible with the Koran and with African oral traditions and legends, make for a better understanding of the Bible. However, a vigorous discussion of the differences between the Bible, the Koran, and the oral resources within the African Traditional Religion would have been of major assistance in better understanding the Bible.

I believe that O'Donovan has made an important contribution in the development of textbooks suited specifically for theological education in Africa. What he has begun should be continued as African evangelical scholars take up the task of writing theological textbooks from an African perspective. I recommend O'Donovan's book to every African theological and religious educator, and to Africa's theological schools for library purchase and for classroom use.

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2 Corinthians
Tyndale New Testament
Commentaries
by Colin Kruse

(Leicester/Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity
Press/Eerdmans, 1987) 224 pages;
£4.25/\$10.

Since the 1950's, the Tyndale NT Commentary series has proved a faithful friend to students and pastors. The original volume on 2 Corinthians, written by the late R.V.G. Tasker, was no exception and can be found in a great many institutional and personal libraries. But now a replacement volume, by Colin Kruse, has been published. Should you invest in a copy? Yes, indeed, even if you already own the earlier volume! At \$10, the new commentary is a bargain. For that price you receive a commentary that definitely supersedes the former one.

To begin with, Professor Kruse (of Ridley College, Australia) has the advantage of thirty additional years of scholarship upon which to draw. Thus his list of frequently cited works has several commentaries published after 1958, material unavailable to this predecessor. In all, the author notes

some twenty commentaries (English, France, Herman) on 2 Corinthians.

A second advantage the author had was the opportunity to see exactly what had previously been done within the limits of the Tyndale format and then improve upon Tasker's work. For example, Kruse recognized the need for an expanded discussion of introductory matters. In comparison to the 1958 commentary, the new volume devotes twice as much space to the introduction and to the commentary on 2 Corinthians 1, thus laying a very solid foundation right at the beginning.

But it is in virtue of the quality of the exegesis itself that the new commentary becomes an investment and not merely a purchase. The real strength of Kruse's work is his consistent and obvious effort to demonstrate the continuity of Paul's thought showing how one verse or section leads into another. In other words, the commentary does an effective job of making exegetical sense out of the diverse subjects taken up by Paul. For example, in introducing chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians, Kruse notes that Paul seems (at that point) to be rejoicing in a good relationship with the Corinthians (7:14-16). Thus the apostle felt free to encourage them to renew their previous commitment to the collection for the church in Jerusalem (ch. 8-9). Laudable also is Kruse's effort to integrate 2

Corinthians 6:14-7:1 into its context, a notoriously difficult task. Having already defended the integrity of ch. 1-9, the author proceeds, cautiously, to suggest possible exegetical links with surrounding material.

The main vehicle for explaining these textual links are the short introductions Kruse gives to each passage. This element, lacking in the Tasker volume, greatly enhances the usefulness of the new commentary, helping the reader follow the logic of Paul's argument more easily. Because of this format, however, Professor Kruse has generally omitted mentioning the connecting links when discussing individual verses. The uninformed reader who picks up the commentary merely to check on one or two verses is likely to miss out on some of the riches hidden in this slight volume.

For a commentary of this size (168 pages of analysis), the discussion of individual verses is ample and will help a student understand how to proceed in analyzing the various elements of a dense verse or passage. Although Tasker had stated many of the same conclusions, the newer volume does a superior job of leading the reader to perceive why the interpretation is considered to be correct.

A good example can be found in the exegetical discussion of 2 Corinthians 5:14 ["For the love of Christ controls

us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died"]. Kruse comments on the source of pressure on Paul, viz. the love of Christ. Explaining the possible interpretations for the phrase "of Christ," he ultimately opts for a subjective genitive (Christ loves). Next he explores the implication of Christ's "death for all," noting the possibilities presented by the preposition "for" (*hyper*) but also taking into consideration Pauline theology as a whole. The author then shows how his exegetical decision with respect to this particular expression (*hyper*="instead of") provides a logical link with the succeeding phrase, "therefore all died."

Professor Kruse has included, where deemed enlightening, simple but cogent comments on Greek grammar. The depth of the commentary is enhanced as well by several references to other Greek documents, notably the Septuagint and the non-literary papyri. Less frequently mentioned are the Qumran writings and the rabbinic literature. The use of Strack-Billerbeck may, however, raise the question of the chronological appropriateness of these rabbinic citations.

A few other caveats could be mentioned. Perhaps the most conspicuous one for many readers will be the fact that the author regards 2 Corinthians as a somewhat haphazard

scribal joining of disparate portions of two Pauline letters: chapters 1-9 and chapters 10-13. The question of the unity of the epistle has, of course, been debated ever since Semler in the 18th century. The previous Tyndale volume opted for a single letter (largely on the basis of manuscript evidence), whereas Kruse finds himself unable to reconcile the (abrupt) change in tone between chapters 1-9 and 10-13. Readers who would like to compare Kruse's position with other formulations may consult the NT Introductions of Guthrie (1990⁴) and of Carson, Moo, and Morris (1992), the latter presenting a more nuanced position. The practical outcome of Kruse's decision is that he does not attempt to link chapter 10 to what precedes, and possible connections between the two sections are sometimes overlooked. [Yet he does mention finding thematic echoes of 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 throughout the entire canonical epistle--in chapters 4, 6, 7, and 11-12.]

No commentary the size of the Tyndale volumes can be expected to address all the issues of current scholarship. Nevertheless, some reference to the works of Theissen (*The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*), Meeks (*The First Urban Christians*), Georgi (*The Opponents of Paul in 2 Corinthians*) would surely have strengthened the reader's grasp of the

socio-cultural situation of first-century Corinth. Reference to Betz's commentary (*2 Corinthians 8 and 9*, Hermeneia series) is also missing.

A specific point in the text that may be questioned is 2 Corinthians 7:1, where Kruse speaks of sacred prostitution in Corinth.

Murphy-O'Connor (*Corinth in the Time of St. Paul*), cited elsewhere by the author, has, however, provided evidence that such a statement could well be anachronistic for the 1st century A.D.

In line with the Tyndale format in general, the focus of the work is on an exegetical understanding of the text itself. Homiletical applications are left to others. [But note p. 181, on 2 Corinthians 10:16.]

The material presentation of the paperback is satisfactory for its price; the book will not fall apart after the first few uses. I noted only one editing error (p. 156, *translations* instead of *translation*). The text used is the Revised Standard Version, occasionally compared with the New International Version.

We here in Africa are always in need of good commentaries that are reasonably priced, solidly evangelical, written at a level accessible to our students (Bible college and beyond) and to pastors. InterVarsity Press and Eerdmans have offered us precisely that in this commentary on 2 Corinthians.

The volume is a welcome and affordable addition to the resources available to today's Bible student. I warmly recommend it for every theological library, whether institutional or personal.

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