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# The B.M.S. and Bible Translation.

(Continued from p. 105.)

## III.

### FROM THE B.M.S. JUBILEE, 1842, TO THE CENTENARY, 1892.

**A**FTER the death of Dr. Joshua Marshman, the last survivor of the famous Serampore trio, in 1837, Calcutta became the publishing centre of the Baptist Mission for Bengal and North India. Three great oriental scholars entered into the succession of Bible translators. Dr. William Yates became famous for his grammar of Sanskrit. He carried out a new revision of the Bengali Bible, and collaborated with Leslie and others in revising the New Testament in Hindi and Urdu.

Dr. John Wenger followed on, and for many years was the outstanding European scholar in Bengali and Sanskrit. His two revised editions (1852, 1874) of the entire Bible in both languages were a prodigious achievement. By his Bengali grammar, his New Testament Commentary in Bengali, and many other works, he left a most valuable literary legacy. His mantle fell upon another gifted scholar, Dr. George H. Rouse, under whose skilful and painstaking guidance of trained Indian helpers fresh advance was made in Bengali Revision. The eleventh edition of the Bible was issued in 1909. It is claimed that a more accurate version of the Holy Scriptures does not exist in any language than in Bengali. Dr. Rouse also edited for the Mohammedans of East Bengal special editions of Scripture portions in what is called the Mussulmani Bengali: these were issued in 1876.

In the Hindi language a most important revision of the New Testament was undertaken by John Parsons in 1857, and completed before his death in 1869. J. D. Bate followed this up with a revision of the Hindi Old Testament. Later revisions of both the Urdu and the Hindi versions have taken place, in which G. J. Dann has rendered valuable service on Union Committees.

The Bible Translation Society published in 1843 an Armenian version by Carapeit Aratoon which found much acceptance among Armenians resident in India as well as in Turkey. It was issued in both Modern and Ancient Armenian.

New translations were promoted by the Baptist Mission in this period for the hill tribes of Northern India—Lepcha, Santali (1856) and Garo (1874).

The Baptist Missionaries in Orissa had their own Mission Press at Cuttack, and carried on a vigorous policy of Christian publication in the Oriya language. Dr. Sutton and Dr. Buckley revised the version of the entire Bible in Oriya, which was again revised more than once with each reprinting within this period. A gifted Oriya Christian poet, Makunda Das, rendered the Gospels and the books of Psalms and Proverbs into Oriya verse. At a later period (1915), H. W. Pike made another version of the New Testament in simple modern Oriya, on lines initiated by Dr. George Howells.

Within this period falls the opening of a great new chapter of Bible translation in Africa, the continent of many tribes speaking many languages and varying dialects.

The Baptist Missionary Society began its work in West Africa at the island of Fernando Po in 1840, following up the previous labours of Baptist Missionaries from the West Indies. J. Merrick and J. J. Fuller translated the Gospels, the Book of Genesis and other selections into Isubu in 1846, and Clark and Saker prepared a translation in Fernandian in 1849. To the heroic Alfred Saker belongs the honour of a great achievement in Dualla, one of the Bantu family of languages. In 1847 he began the translation of the New Testament, labouring day by day from 4 o'clock a.m. with characteristic zeal and enthusiasm. He constructed his own printing press, cut the matrices and founded his own type with such lead as he could purchase from passing ships. His literary work was carried on amidst almost incredible hardships and hindrances. In reducing the Dualla to a written form he said he "found the verbs giving him much labour." In 1851 he began to print the New Testament, and in 1862 he had finished it. The Old Testament caused him severe toil, "especially Job and Ezekiel." He wrote home begging for more books on Biblical Criticism, for a copy of the Septuagint, and for books on the Hebrew text. The entire Bible was at last translated, and on 23rd February, 1872, he wrote: "I feel as a bird long imprisoned liberated at last. . . . The last sheet of the sacred volume in good readable type is before me."

He was not satisfied, however—and a revised edition of the New Testament, embodying his own emendations, was brought out after his death by his daughter in 1880.

It will be more convenient to deal in the next section with the great advance in Bible translation which followed the opening up of the Congo Missions, but actually the first portions of the New Testament in the Kongo language appeared in 1888, and this was included in the B.M.S. list published in the Centenary Volume in 1892.

In 1843 grants were made to assist the production of the

translation of one of the gospels in the Karif or Carib language of British Honduras by a Baptist Missionary, A. Henderson.

In 1847 there was published at Brest in Brittany the translation of the New Testament in the Breton language by the B.M.S. missionary, John Jenkins.

It is a matter of very special interest to recall that for a few years between 1877 and 1890 the B.M.S. had its own missionaries—W. J. White and G. Eaves—in Japan. The work was then transferred to the American Baptist Missionary Union. But as early as 1867 the Bible Translation Society gave encouragement and assistance to the American Baptist Missionary, J. Goble, of Yokohama, in his translation of the New Testament into Japanese, and made grants for the printing of the first volumes of the Christian Scriptures ever published in Japan in both Roman and Japanese (Sokana) Script. The Gospel of Matthew was issued in 1874. The New Testament was completed by the American Baptist Mission in 1879.

Grants were made from the Baptist Translation funds to aid the publication and distribution of the New Testament in Danish in 1866 and in the German language in 1874.

The languages added in the period 1842-1892 were the following :

1843	Karif or Carib (Honduras)	1856	Santali
1843	Armenian (Modern and Ancient)	1865	Maya
1847	Dualla (Cameroons)	1866	Danish
1847	Breton	1872	Japanese
1848	Fernandian	1872	Mussulmani Bengali
1848	Isubu	1874	Garó
1856	Lepcha	1874	German
		1888	Ki Kongo

bringing the total for the century to 60.

At the Centenary in 1892 it was recorded that since the formation of the B.M.S. in 1792 no less than £202,656 had been devoted to the production of Scripture versions and their circulation.

#### IV.

##### FROM THE CENTENARY 1892 to 1940.

Congo offered a great pioneer field to Baptist Missionary translators. Here was virgin soil in which to dig. No books existed. None of the 70 languages of the Congo basin had been committed to writing. Vocabularies had to be collected with long and painstaking effort. The grammatical constructions had

to be discovered, and the first tentative efforts made to translate the sacred message. It is a record as full of romance as the achievements of Carey, though in a different realm.

The first B.M.S. Congo Station was San Salvador, opened in 1879. The station at Wathen was opened in 1884 in the Cataract region, where the same Ki-Kongo language is spoken.

H. Ross Phillips was the first to produce a Scripture translation by rendering the book of Jonah. Mrs. Thomas Lewis translated the stories of Elijah and Elisha. George R. R. Cameron, at Wathen, finished the Gospel of Mark in 1888, and J. H. Weeks, at Old Underhill, did the Gospel of Matthew in 1889. Bentley printed Luke in 1890. These had to serve until the whole of the New Testament in Ki Kongo appeared. The outstanding leader in this field was Dr. William Holman Bentley—a linguistic scholar of eminence raised up by God for the need of the time. He devoted himself with assiduous labour to the compilation of his Kongo Grammar and Dictionary, first published in 1887 with a supplemental volume in 1895. He was happy in the companionship and valuable help of Don Zoao Nlemvo, the son of a Congo chief, of unusual intelligence and language ability, who was his amanuensis both in Africa and in England until 1893, when the first edition of the New Testament was published. The arrival of the printed volumes was an occasion of great rejoicing among the Congo people. Bentley, with his devoted wife and Nlemvo, continued their labours on the Old Testament. Bentley suffered a period of temporary blindness, and Nlemvo became permanently blind. At the time of Bentley's lamented death at the end of 1905 he had finished Genesis, Proverbs and the book of Psalms as far as Psalm 92. To complete this book was his widow's sacred privilege. The unfinished task was then undertaken as expeditiously as possible, being divided among six able and experienced missionaries—Phillips, Graham, Cameron, Frame, Wooding and Lewis. The whole Bible was completed in sections by 1916. This plan had the advantage and disadvantage of a variety of style, and even of difference in dialects. Some translators did their work at San Salvador, others at Wathen, Zombo and Kimpese. It was clearly necessary to make a complete revision of the whole. So, with the addition of the Rev. R. Glennie, the Secretary of the Bible Translation Society, the six missionary translators were formed into a Revision Committee. "Everyone was agreed," wrote Thomas Lewis, "on keeping out all foreign words, and insisted on all words being translated into the Kongo tongue." So, with the exception of proper names, and the words "Alleluia, Hosanna and Amen," the Kongo Scriptures contain no foreign expressions. The words bishop,

church, angel, baptism, all appear in the nearest Kongo equivalent. "Testament" is translated by the Kongo word for "Covenant," and the very name of the book appears not as "the Bible," but as "Nkanda Nzambi," "The Book of God."

With some differences not yet entirely resolved, the Ki Kongo or Kisi Kongo language and the Fioti Kongo prevail over the area west of Stanley Pool to the sea coast of Angola. The B.M.S., the American Baptists and the Swedish Mission (Svenska Missions Forbundet) have produced translations and literature in both Ki Kongo and Fioti. Both are used at present in the Union Training College for preachers and teachers at Kimpese, in which all three Missions co-operate. The Roman Missions use another kindred dialect. There is reasonable expectation that a unified form of the language for the whole Lower Congo region will emerge before long. In 1925 the B.M.S. published a Diglot edition of the book of Psalms in Ki Kongo and Portuguese (D'Almeida), and a New Testament in 1935. This was to meet the difficulty occasioned by the Portuguese Government's prohibition of the use of the vernacular in schools, and their suspicious attitude about its use even in worship. Diglot hymn-books were also published.

The first of the Upper Congo languages to be brought by the B.M.S. missionaries into the sacred circle of Bible versions was the Lo Bo-Bangi spoken in the area now occupied by the B.M.S. stations of Lukolela, Bolobo and Tsumbiri. Messrs. Richards and Darby made their first attempts in the language in 1886. R. Glennie arrived in 1889, and J. Whitehead in 1890. Whitehead published a Bobangi Grammar and Dictionary in 1899, Whitehead and Scrivener translated the Gospels and printed them at Bolobo between 1892 and 1895. With the help of J. A. Clark, the New Testament in Bobangi was completed in 1912. The Old Testament is not yet completed. Genesis, Psalms, Daniel, Hosea to Malachi have been published. Isaiah has recently been translated by A. W. G. McBeath. Bobangi is the chief native language used, with French in the Mission Schools. Other languages are spoken in the hinterland. J. A. Clark has translated the Gospels and other selections in Sengele, published in 1915. Selections were also printed in Mpama, and in Teke, the language spoken about Tsumbiri, the Gospels of Mark and John have been published.

For the purposes of Government and trade, the attempt has been made to reduce the complexity of the Congo language problem by the selection in four chief areas of a "lingua franca." One of these is the Luba of the Kasai river region. The other three are languages in which the B.M.S. is operating. They are Ki-Kongo for the Lower River already referred to, Lingala for

the Main River from Stanley Pool eastward to Stanley Falls, and Kingwana for the North and East of the Belgian Colony.

It will be convenient to refer here to the translation work done in Lingala and Kingwana.

Li Ngala is in process of development—built up, as it were, on the basis of the speech of the Ngalas, with such imported terms as are necessary to make it a medium of elementary education and literature.

Walter Stapleton and J. H. Weeks made a beginning at Monsembe and produced the Gospel of Matthew in 1895, followed by Old Testament stories and the Book of Acts by H. T. Stone-lake. Frank Longland produced a Lingala Grammar and Vocabulary in French and English on the basis of Stapleton's previous work. Dodds and Guyton and others followed with Luke and John. D. C. Davies made another trial of the Riverine Lingala with the Book of Acts. A union version of Mark was issued by the B.F.B.S. in 1934. In the Welle district a different variety of Lingala has been employed. The latest achievement is the compilation of a Grammar and Vocabulary by Malcolm Guthrie, of Kinshasa, and the preparation of a revised version of the New Testament is in hand.

Ki Ngwana is a form of the Swahili language, widely spoken but hitherto not much developed for literature. The B.M.S. missionaries at Yakusu, Stanleyville, and on the Lomami River have taken a useful share in what has been attempted. Selections from the Gospels were translated in 1905. J. Whitehead compiled a Harmony Gospel in Kingwana in 1916. G. J. Wilkerson and J. N. Clark also took a share. A union version of Matthew was issued in 1934. The New Testament has now been completed.

The wide area in which the B.M.S. stations of Upoto and Pimu are established is peopled by tribes speaking several languages. At first the missionaries at Upoto devoted their attention to the Li-foto, and from 1898 the Gospels and most of the books of the New Testament were translated by W. L. Forfeitt, F. Oram and Kenred Smith. But as the Mission extended it became apparent that Li-foto did not carry far enough in the district, and Li Ngombe was adopted instead for the work of the Church and the schools. Again Mr. Forfeitt and his wife, with their colleagues—K. Smith, Dodds and Marker—set themselves to the task, and between 1903 and 1930 the whole New Testament was translated and again revised in Li Ngombe.

In the area of the Yalamba Mission, with its sub-stations at Elizabetha and Ligasa, the prevailing language for Church and school work is Heso, though Li Ngala is much used in the district. Some translation has been done in Soko and Topoke. W. R. Kirby and A. B. Palmer shared in these labours. In 1920

the Heso New Testament was published. There are parts of the Old Testament in Heso—the historical books and Psalms.

In the Yakusu Mission area the language which has been most employed for missionary purposes is Lo Kele, in which W. H. Stapleton, W. Millman, Kempton, Wilford and Sutton Smith have produced since 1899 the New Testament in more than one edition, and most of the Old Testament. A considerable number of religious and educational books have been issued in Lokele, which are eagerly sought after by the rapidly growing Christian community.

The French language is also being used in the schools, and for evangelistic purposes in the widely extending area from the Lomami to the Lualaba and eastward of Stanleyville, Foma, Kumu, Ena, Bale, Manga, Olumbu, Essoo and other dialects are employed, as well as Li Ngala and Ki Ngwana. Mr. Millman is now engaged on a revision of the Lokele New Testament.

#### AMONG INDIAN ABORIGINES.

No part of the devoted wealth of Robert Arthington has been more fruitful in its maintenance of pioneer missionary work than that which has gone to the initiation and support of the Lushai Mission. The first two pioneer missionaries, J. H. Lorrain and F. W. Savidge, set out in 1890, supported by Mr. Arthington himself. After many difficulties they were able to settle at Aijal, in the North Lushai hills. There they made their friendly advances among a wild and sturdy mountain people; they began their painstaking study of the language; they compiled a grammar and a vocabulary of 7,000 words, and made their first efforts in translation. By 1898-1899 they were able to publish the Gospels of Luke and John and the Book of Acts in Lushai. There was an interval of three years, during which the two pioneers went to the Abor-Miri people, another frontier tribe. When they left Aijal they transferred a vigorous and rapidly growing work to the Welsh Presbyterian Mission, which under God's blessing has ever since greatly prospered in the Northern Hills. In 1900, after Mr. Arthington's death, the Baptist Missionary Society opened up a Mission in the South Lushai hills. At the Society's invitation, Lorrain and Savidge made a fresh gospel invasion of the Lushai people, settling at Lungleh, eight days journey from Aijal. Here the work has marvellously prospered. It is reckoned that of the population of 28,000 scattered over hundreds of mountain villages, no less than 19,000 have accepted the Christian faith and are receiving Christian education for their children. The membership of the Baptist churches alone is 7,200. There has always been the most cordial co-operation between the Missions in the North and

South. J. H. Lorrain continued to bear the honourable burden of Bible translation and literary work in the Lushai language. In addition to the New Testament, which appeared in 1916, the translation of the Old Testament is proceeding. Genesis, Psalms and Isaiah have been published. In this high task one of the trained Lushai Christian helpers, Mr. Challiana, is now engaged. Mr. Lorrain published a gospel portion in the Abor Miri language in 1908, and a dictionary of that language in 1910. His greatest literary achievement, the labour of forty years, is now being published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal—a Dictionary of the Lushai language.

For the Aboriginal tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, a version of the New Testament—the work of George Hughes—was published in 1915 in the Chakma language—in Roman script—and a Gospel portion in Chakma has also been issued by Mr. W. J. L. Wenger in Burmese Script.

In the language of the Moghs, Mr. P. H. Jones translated the Gospel of Mark in 1915.

The late Professor J. Drake, of Serampore, began his missionary life among the Kurku-speaking people of Central India. In 1900 he translated and published the Gospel of Mark in Kurku. He also published a grammar of the Kurku language in 1903.

In the hills of Kondistan, on the borders of Orissa and Madras, the Kui-speaking tribe have responded in a very encouraging manner to the labours of the B.M.S. missionaries in the last thirty-five years, during which, by the Arthington Fund, new residential mission stations have been opened up and organised work established. Earlier evangelistic tours among the Konds had been carried on by Wilkinson and Long, but not till 1906 could systematic language work be undertaken. The first Kui version of Mark's Gospel was produced by O. J. Millman and his colleagues in 1916, followed later by the Gospel of John. A most valuable linguistic achievement was made by W. W. Winfield, whose Kui English Dictionary and Kui Grammar were published by the Government. The unhealthy climate of the Kond Hills has caused many serious losses by removal from the European missionary staff, and this has interfered greatly with the continued prosecution of the Bible translation, much needed with a rapidly growing church membership already numbering 1,600 in thirty organised congregations. The New Testament has thus far been translated into Kui from Matthew to II. Corinthians.

Here the record is complete to the present date.

The great task is unfinished. As evangelisation advances, and the Christian Church continues to grow, the language problem

constantly calls for courageous solution. New versions are needed for people who are still strangers to the truth, and who know only their own dialect. This calls, as in the past, for wisely directed zeal and the consecration of linguistic ability. It also calls for funds to meet the necessary outlay in the maintenance of the missionary translators and their native helpers, and in printing and promoting the circulation of books among new readers. Early versions need to be revised and made more perfect. Native scholars have to be taught and trained for this high and holy service. Long before the results can be shown there must be much patient labour out of sight. It can never be spectacular. But it should be laid upon the hearts of the Lord's people, and should be constantly upheld in their prayers. No department of Foreign Missions is more essential and important. Baptists still have a place of responsible leadership in it. At the present date the Bible Translation and Literature Committee of the B.M.S. is needing funds for the completion of the Bible in the Lushai hills, the Kond hills and the Chittagong hills. Necessary revisions and re-issues of existing versions are called for in Orissa and Bengal. In none of the languages of the Upper Congo is the Bible yet complete.

As the Church in this land gratefully acknowledges its vast debt to Wyclif, Tyndale, Coverdale and the great translators and revisers of our English Bible, so will the Churches of Asia, Africa and the far islands count among their apostolic heroes the Careys, Sakers, Bentleys, and many other Baptist translators.

It is our privilege to perpetuate their influence and imitate their example.

The languages added to the B.M.S. list of Bible versions in the period from the Centenary 1892 to the present year, 1940, are the following :

1892	Bangi	1908	Abor Miri
1895	Ngala	1912	Lwena
1898	Foto	1915	Chakma
1898	Lushai	1915	Mogi
1899	Kele	1915	Sengele
1900	Kurku	1915	Mpama
1903	Ngombe	1915	Tetela
1905	Teke	1916	Kui
1905	Ngwana	1921	Lamba
1905	Soko	1923	Topoke
1907	Heso		

bringing the total from 1792 to 1940 to eighty-one.

CHARLES E. WILSON.