

Briefings

The entrance of thy words giveth light (Ps. 119:130)

December 2011



Don't Forget to Pack the Party

by Cheryl Elmer, Women's & Children's Ministry Coordinator

Planning a family birthday party should be easy. Keep it simple. Use the key elements of a typical birthday: honoree, birthday cake, birthday candles, birthday cards, birthday presents, and family members to sing "Happy Birthday." If you want to add a little flair, throw in some balloons, a party favor, and decorations.

Bibles International turned 30 years old this year. Thirty is a maturity marker, and signs of that maturity are very evident at BI. An impressive number of Scripture translation projects are reaching completion. New translation projects are being researched and begun. We have reason to celebrate!

cont. on p. 3



BI's recent Harvest Dinner celebrated our 30th year of Bible translation

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IN A WORD

P. Hantz Bernard, Director

The Role of the Church in Bible Translation

Thirty years of experience in any field constitute an adequate time span for anyone, either an individual or an organization, to legitimately claim mature understanding of that field. With thirty years of Bible translation experience behind us, we at BI have had plenty of time to develop a biblical philosophy of Bible translation. In this and upcoming columns, I plan to address some common misconceptions we encounter regarding Bible translation, and how we have coped with them.

In this column, I'll start by discussing misconceptions regarding the role of the church in the Bible translation process. First, some may feel that Bible translation can take place outside of the church's authority or oversight. I call this the *authority vacuum* misconception. Traditionally, Bible societies or groups or even an individual would produce a translation of the Scriptures; then the church would either adopt it or not. However, this approach could potentially circumvent an appropriate set of biblical standards for how translations should be produced. Surely, just as the church proposed standards by which the canon was formed and nearly universally accepted, one would expect that the church would also play a key role in the translation of the Scripture.

Second, some churches may see their giving to Bible societies as that of helping out an external ministry—rather than that of fulfilling a God-given commission. But whom has the Lord established as the custodian, the guardian, the steward of His Word, if not the church? Is the church helping the Bible society, or vice versa?

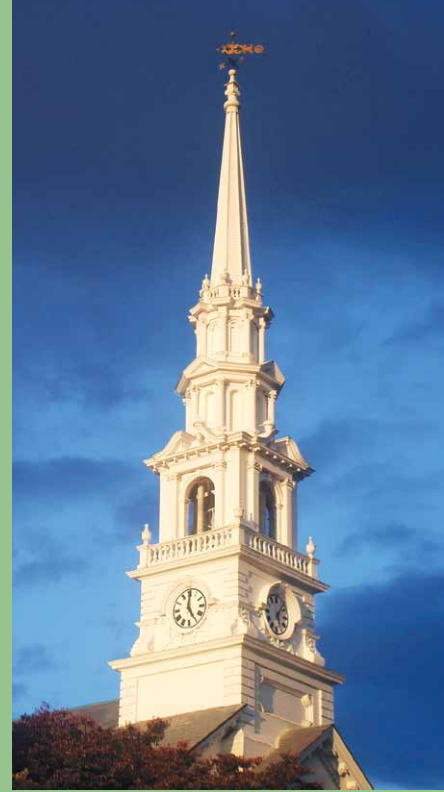
I'll mention briefly two other misconceptions regarding the role of the church in Bible translation. Some churches are completely oblivious to their role in the perpetual process of preserving the Scriptures both by transcription—preserving the copies of the originals—and by translation. At other times, the church rejects the notion that the Word of God can be translated into modern vernaculars and still remain the Word of God with the same strength that it has in English, French, or Spanish.

As you can see, such misconceptions about the church's role, either by churches themselves or by individuals within a church, weakens the work of BI. Some Bible societies have resorted to bypassing the church altogether in the process. But we at BI persist in allowing the church to play its role. One of the tenets of BI's core values is that we

have “resolved to ... do Bible translation as a result of, or in association with, church planting.” We believe that God has given the custody of His Word to the church (1 Tim. 3:14-15; Jude 3) and not to Bible societies. We do Bible translating by delegation of authority from the church. We are commissioned by churches to assist other churches in the languages in which translations are done. We raise funds within the church network for the translations just as any conservative mission agency would do. We do not engage in any translation work unless there are churches that have already been established within that given ethnic group or there is church planting contemporaneous with the translation process.

In the country where the translation project is going on, we require that a sponsorship committee be formed with delegates from churches. They sign a contract with BI. They own the translation project in their language. Our involvement in the process, even though we may subsidize their budget by 90% or we may be the Bible translation experts, is one of assistance, not of ownership.

In presenting the work of BI to churches, I often declare that I am not asking them to help us but to help us help them. One church in Bunker Hill, Illinois, sent us a generous check at the beginning of the year along with a letter that said in part, “Our church body desires to send you the enclosed check to be an encouragement to you and your team in 2011 ... and we are passionate about encouraging you in this endeavor So please keep on seeking Him and being used in the way He is using you for His purposes in the days ahead.” In a word, I can only say this: Proper church role in Bible translation captured!



Briefings is the triannual newsletter of Bibles International, the Bible Society of Baptist Mid-Missions.



BMM President | Dr. Gary Anderson
BI Director/Editor | Dr. P. Hantz Bernard
Associate Editor | Mrs. Becky Kerr
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Pack the Party, cont.

Yet a BI birthday party carries a few complications. There is no way to bring the whole family together. We literally span the globe. BI people are found in places that elicit the question, “Where is that?” Getting to most of these spots involves multiple flights, sometimes on airlines our USA friends have never heard of. The final leg of a BI journey may also involve dirt runways, dusty roads, a fast-moving river, or mountain switchbacks.

Instead of sending out invitations to come to this BI birthday party, we would literally have to send out the party! In a brainstorming session in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the concept of a “Celebration in a Suitcase” was born. And, yes, it meant putting all the traditional elements of a birthday party into one suitcase so that when the BI translation consultant or projects manager or coordinator made a trip to the edge of the desert, to the side of the mountain, to the tropical island, to the cities of Asia, Europe, Africa, the BI family would celebrate what God has brought about in these 30 years—the maturing and expanding of the ministry of Bibles International.

As we figured out the logistics of this traveling celebration, our collective experience on many continents helped us maneuver some of the pitfalls. Don’t send chocolate with the favors because it will melt; send hard candy. Do we need to translate the birthday card into all the languages necessary? Will all of these areas have what is necessary to bake the cake mixes we will send along?

We made a few mistakes. At our first party in Africa, there was a stove with an oven, but there were no cake pans. Using his resourcefulness, Chief Translation Consultant Glenn Kerr baked the cake mixes in round metal bowls. The iced cakes looked like a series of igloos, something unique for the Sahara desert, but no one seemed to mind. We also found that our favors (post-it notes with the BI logo on them) were not very useful in a developing nation, while ballpoint pens with our logo were more appreciated.

So the suitcases continue to travel, filled with their cake mixes, containers of icing, appropriate favors, birthday cards, party napkins, plates, and tablecloths ... and balloons! In some big-city locations, the BI traveler can actually buy a birthday cake; but that traveler is the fortunate one. The rest continue to figure out how to bake the cakes in a variety of ovens at a variety of altitudes and with a variety of special friends around the world.



Glenn Kerr prepares cake for Celebration in a Suitcase



Did you know?

BI is on Facebook! “Like” us to get up-to-date news on language projects around the world.

When the BI Stewardship Department sat down to brainstorm how to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Bibles International, the first question we asked was, "Who do we want to celebrate with?" We decided that we wanted to include our national translation team members around the world, so we came up with what we called Celebration in a Suitcase. With each consultant who traveled overseas to work on one of our translation projects we sent all the things needed for a party! Below is how the party looked in each of the countries, including the Baptist Mid-Missions annual conference in Cleveland, Ohio.



Ohio

BI Staff enjoy refreshments



Chad

Chadians enjoy some cake in honor of BI's 30th year



Venezuela

The Warao team visits at the celebration

Celebration

in



Southeast Asia

Our national coworkers pose before cutting the cake

Papua New Guinea

Craig and Linda Throop and the Kaulong translation team get ready to light the candles

India

In India, CIS includes a spread of curry and rice



a Suitcase

A Monumental Project—The King James Bible

by Mike Grant

In this final article in his series on the English Bible, Mike Grant, Founder & President of Treasuring the Word Ministries International, explains the painstaking care taken in the translation of the King James version.

King James I convened the Hampton Court Conference Saturday, January 14 through Wednesday, January 18, 1604, to address the reform proposals of the Puritans' Millenary Petition presented to him on April 4, 1603, prior to his coronation. Very little, if any, reform resulted from this conference because the majority of its participants did not desire it. The four Puritans had no chance against King James and his 18 Anglican churchmen. Despite the united opposition of King James and the Anglicans toward the Puritans and their recommended reforms, a clear, positive result came from this conference when John Reynolds, a Puritan, "moved his Majesty, that there might be a new translation of the Bible." That "new translation" would become known as the King James Bible.

Richard Bancroft, the Bishop of London, was appointed by King James to manage the project. Since translation work requires translators, Bancroft assembled and presented a list of 54 names for approval by the King. Though a few Puritan Anglicans were included in this list, the majority was of the non-Puritan stripe. Theologically, these men, with the exception of the Puritans, were essentially Roman Catholic in their doctrine but linguistically brilliant and thus qualified for translation work in the opinion of Bancroft and the King, who approved Bancroft's list in June 1604, approximately five months after Hampton Court.

Bancroft, with input from the King, also composed 15 rules that guided the "new translation" project. Without discussing these rules in detail, some general observations can be made concerning them:

- Some of the rules were clearly a reaction to the Geneva Bible and its contents.
- They guaranteed order, accuracy, and accountability in the project's process.
- Allowance was made for consultation, comparison, and use of words from previous English editions of the Bible, including

the Bishop's, Tyndale's, Matthews', Coverdale's, Great, and, surprisingly, the Geneva. (In fact, the Anglican churchmen's use of the Geneva Bible in their sermons, etc., is an ironic story in itself.)

- The rules anticipated and sought the involvement of the best qualified linguists the Anglican Church and England had to offer.

To handle the workload of the project, six companies were formed, two each at Westminster, Cambridge, and Oxford. Nine translators, one of which was the director, comprised each company. (It should be noted that some sources list a total less than 54.) Each company was responsible for a section of the Bible, including the Apocrypha. Each translator was assigned certain chapters to complete on his own. As individual translators completed their work, they passed it along to the others in their company for checking. When everyone in a company had completed and checked one another's work, a single copy was made from all the individual work done in the company. This single copy was passed along to another company until each company had checked all the work done by the other two companies. The process resulted in three completed sets of work, one from each company, examined and edited into a single manuscript. Following a nine-month editing period, this single manuscript, comprised of almost 750,000 words, became the final draft for the printing of the King James Bible. One can easily see the painstaking, detailed thoroughness of the translation/revision process!

Why would these translators subject themselves, in their free time, to an almost seven-year project? Numerous answers could be given, but probably none better than one supplied by Miles Smith in his "The Translators to the Reader" section, a preface that no longer appears in the King James Bible. He states,

"Now what can be more available [having a beneficial effect] thereto, than to deliver God's book unto God's people in a tongue which they understand?"

This is in part what motivated them and this year we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the fruit from that motivation—the King James Bible.

a 1611 edition of the King James version



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 Gene Kelly

In Memory of
 Given by
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 Mildred Overstreet
Julia Antonia Álvarez
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Your God-directed help is greatly appreciated!

PROJECTS UPDATE

The Finish Line Is in Sight!

The finish line is in sight for several projects. Our projected dates of publication may need to be readjusted by a few months—but the completion is near! Please pray for these projects. The final hurdles often seem to be the most challenging.

Kabiyé (Togo)

The printing is completed. The New Testament is currently in shipment to Togo. The dedication service is scheduled for January 30, 2012. It is fully funded!

Quechua (Peru)

The New Testament is at the printer. The dedication is scheduled for the third week of January 2012. It is fully funded!



Translation Consultant Ross Hodsdon with the Bualkhaw translators

Many long hours go into the translation of the Scriptures—hours that become days, then weeks, months, and years. The work is often tedious and seemingly without reward as one pours himself into the translation. It is often a challenge to keep progressing in the work, especially when the completion seems so far away. But the excitement grows and becomes almost palpable when the finish line is in sight.

Bualkhaw (SE Asia)

The final corrections for the New Testament have been entered. The translation team is looking over the text one more time to confirm all the details. We can send it to the printer as soon as the funds are provided.

Zotung (SE Asia)

The corrections for the New Testament are being entered in the formatted text. It will be sent back to the translation team for a final proofreading. If all is well, we can send it to the printer as soon as the funds are provided.

Inpui Naga (India)

The text of the New Testament is being formatted and prepared for the initial proofreading. After it is proofread, we will enter any corrections that need to be made and return it for a final proofreading. Soon after, it will be ready to send to the printer once the funds are provided.

God has faithfully provided for all our projects, and none has been delayed due to funding. Through God's people, we believe that we will continue to see His provision for these projects!

Other projects nearing completion: the Rito New Testament (Chad), the Dagba New Testament (Chad), the Dagaare New Testament (Ghana), the Chakma New Testament (India), the Tedim Chin New Testament (SE Asia), the Matu New Testament (SE Asia), and the Hakha Chin New Testament (SE Asia).

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