

PREFACE

As was the case seven years ago with the publication of Supplementum 2, it is again a privilege for the Bible Society of South Africa to be involved with this volume. In order to fulfil its mission of affordable Bibles to all in their own languages, it remains the ongoing task of the Bible Society to be continuously involved in the process of translating into the languages of South Africa.

This volume is therefore of great importance as it highlights various relevant aspects of the history of translation as well as current issues with which contemporary translators still have to grapple. The very first article reminds us that translation is a process of deducing and reducing meaning from relative chaos, while most Bible readers are unaware of the challenges of this enterprise. However, instead of lamenting the complex dynamics of translation, some enabling suggestions are made that may afford Bible translators a more balanced status.

One article deals with Moffat's translation of the Bible into the language of the Bechuana nation enabling them to hear the voice of the Unseen God in a language in which nothing had up to that stage been reduced to writing before. Another article explores the role of indigenous translations, like that of Moffat, to enable new ways of understanding the church and mission from the perspective of the South. Still focusing on the BaTlhaping, for whom Moffat translated the Bible, the early reception of the Word of God also received attention, as well as the capacity for the Bible 'to speak for itself'. Once the Bible is translated into a local language, it has a life of its own, independent from the translator.

Of historical interest is the information regarding the problems of the translators of the 1933 Afrikaans translation before the standardisation of Afrikaans. At that stage of the development of Afrikaans the translators had real problems regarding vocabulary, pronouns, verbs and adjectives.

Issues of contemporary relevance dealt with includes an analysis of the choices made by translators with reference to the term for the Supreme Being in Zulu translations indicating that the earliest translators adopted the norms of the source text and culture, while in the latest translations the norms of the target culture were adhered to. Equally relevant is the contribution discussing the proposal for an indigenous Bible in South African Sign Language (SASL) for Deaf persons by means of a signed Bible in electronic format. Another interesting venture is the project of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, providing Bible Study Guides translated from the English source text into five languages, namely Sesotho, isiXhosa, Tshivenda, isiZulu and Afrikaans. The Bible Study Guides are used for home study and in Sabbath School classes.

Of great importance is the contribution highlighting the need to involve the target language community in any translation project. This should be heeded by the team currently undertaking a new translation of the Bible in Afrikaans.

There can be no doubt that this volume will make an important contribution to all who are involved in one capacity or the other with the important task of translating the Bible. May this research, as well as the labour of translators in different projects, serve the coming of the Kingdom and to the glory of God.

Rev. Gerrit Kritzinger
Chief Executive Officer
Bible Society of South Africa