

UBS GUIDELINES FOR REVISION OF SCRIPTURE TRANSLATIONS

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SECTION A: POLICY

A. UBS MISSION – Service to all the churches

- a. UBS seeks to serve all the churches (“The Identity and Ethos of the UBS” Midrand 2000)**
- b. UBS maintains the primacy of the Masoretic Text and UBS Greek New Testament (“Guidelines for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible” 1987)**
- c. UBS assists in making Scriptures available according to Church canon and text (“UBS Guidelines for Scripture Translation” 2004)**

B. TRANSLATION POLICY

1. Revision is a matter of policy

- a. New translations are corrected and revised initially as required (light revision)**
- b. Translations are revised according to usage and audience needs (update and localization)**
- c. Established translations are revised for succeeding generations according to Church need (major revision)**

2. Revision is carried out according to the principles of Publishing Process Management (PPM)

- a. Market research will determine need**
- b. Memorandum of Agreement will be established among stakeholders**
- c. Priorities and allocation of resources will be agreed by national Bible Society and other stakeholders**
- d. Revision team will be selected and trained**
- e. Revision will be carried out according to accepted UBS translation principles and procedures**
- f. Copyright protection will be ensured for newly revised translations**
- g. Research will be undertaken to determine results of revision**

Observation: “No translation of the Scriptures should ever be regarded as final, for the Bible must speak to every succeeding generation with undiminished clarity.”

A Guide for Translators and Revisers of the Holy Scriptures, ABS 1961.

SECTION B: REVISION ISSUES AND PROCEDURES¹

1. Introduction

The primary focus of this document is the revision of existing, established translations that have gained acceptance and prestige over a period of time. These are major revisions that may be accomplished in a relatively short period of time; however, in the past they may have taken from twenty-five to a few hundred years!

We will also briefly consider revisions of published New Testaments that are incorporated into complete Bible projects, and of first translated Bibles. Such revisions tend to be of a different nature and are usually less involved than revisions of older established revisions.

We live in an era when all over the world the demand for revisions of older translations is on the increase. Among many other recent revisions we can cite the New King James Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the Revised English Bible, the Nouvelle Bible de Jérusalem, and the Revised Reina Valera.²

In the sixties and seventies, the focus of Bible translation work shifted towards dynamic/functional equivalence translations. The epoch-making insights of Eugene A. Nida and his colleagues in UBS and SIL gave rise to a great number of new translation projects worldwide resulting in meaning-based translations of the Scriptures in natural, idiomatic language forms. Revisions of existing translations were discouraged in favor of new translations that would benefit from new insights in translation and communication theory. Translation officers were advised not to invest financial and human resources in projects that were not based on a functional equivalence approach to translation.

Revisions were also discouraged for political and technical reasons.³ In some sensitive situations the term ‘revision’ was used for something that was basically a new translation, but could not be referred to as such, primarily for church political reasons.

Times have changed. Even though functional equivalence translations had a great impact on the understanding and communication of the biblical message within and outside the established churches, it is recognized today in UBS circles that the

¹Document prepared by Kees de Blois, Daud Soesilo, Carlo Buzzetti; presented and discussed by TTW 2003 and received by COTP 2004.

² For discussion of recent revisions see *The Making of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible* by Bruce C. Metzger, Robert C. Dentan and Walter Harrelson (1991) and *New Light and Truth: The Making of the Revised English Bible* by Roger Coleman (1989).

³ E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1969), p.176: “since revision means changing details, specific changes are so easy to spot and can be readily attacked by the traditionalists who are found in all societies. A new translation is so different from the old that it more or less disarms the attacks of the traditionalists.... There are also technical problems involved in revising an existing translation. In the first place, because changes are made in terms of details, endless time is spent in debating the pros and cons of changing this or that detail.... In the second place, many of the really significant problems with the existing translations have to do with their overall style and structure, rather than with the selection of specific vocabulary items.”

new translations have not made existing, formal equivalence translations entirely obsolete or redundant.

We are also convinced that functional equivalence translation is not the only legitimate approach to translation. Church leaders and also individual Christians who desire to study the Bible more profoundly but do not have access to the biblical source languages, enjoy using translations that more fully reflect formal and structural aspects of the source texts.

2. Reasons for Revisions

A variety of reasons lead to the need for revision of a translation and to the decision to undertake a revision. In the following paragraphs, several of these bases for doing revisions are discussed.

a. Scripture-in-use concerns

Although functional equivalence translation has helped people of all ages both outside and inside the church to understand the meaning of the biblical message more clearly, it is fair to say that these translations have not always had the necessary ingredients to gain wide acceptance as the new generation of church Bibles used for liturgy, preaching, serious Bible study, and personal devotions, except perhaps on special occasions and for specific ministries (youth work, evangelistic activities, etc.). In many parts of the world church leaders perceive that functional equivalence translations are not suitable for use in liturgy and preaching unless elements of form, structure and imagery of the biblical languages are adequately represented in translation. It is for this reason that in the world's major languages only relatively few functional equivalence translations seem to qualify as suitable for use in liturgy and preaching.

In the more established churches, modern literary translations, new translations somewhere in between formal and functional equivalence (e.g., the NIV in the evangelical circles), or even market-sensitive revisions of established translations like the Authorized or King James Version (more conservative circles) had a lot more to offer as candidates for "Church Bibles" than some of our best functional equivalence translations.

We should also not underestimate the role of modern paraphrases, not as replacements of prestigious established translations, but as welcome additions to help people understand the message of the text. Lots of people appreciate using such paraphrases along with their 'real' Bible.

b. Impact of version on Church and society

This leads us to our second point: the influence of established, older translations on Church and society. In the frames of reference of believers, many of these prestigious translations not only reflect respected translation or

church tradition, but in one way or another represent the Word of God itself, embodied in the language, culture and traditions of past and present generations. It is in these translations that favourite Scripture texts have been memorized, quoted and cherished.⁴ For example, the Lord's Prayer, the Twenty-third Psalm, John 3:16 and many other favourite passages have been recited from generation to generation and are remembered as they have been learned.

It is our experience that even secular or post-modern literary critics have a tendency to prefer reading or hearing the Scriptures in the older translations because of their literary features, or perhaps literalisms from the Hebrew or Greek, which sound more literary than modern translations. We should not forget that translations of other literary masterpieces tend to be literary translations and to a large extent also formal equivalence.

It is therefore quite understandable that Bible Societies are increasingly approached with requests to undertake revision projects involving older translations in order to retain what is cherished while at the same time updating it to be usable in the present context.

c. Rapid language change

Bible Societies in countries facing dramatic (socio)linguistic change in a short period of time, e.g., Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Central African Republic, recognize that existing translations need regular revision to ensure that they continue to communicate and be relevant to the present generation. For example, the majority of the churches in Indonesia support their Bible Society in its desire to reach out with the Scriptures in a meaningful way.

d. More than one version

In many parts of the world it has been customary in the Christian community for people to want to benefit from more than one translation of the Scriptures. Christians have become more mature in their approach to the Bible. They do not want to depend solely on what they learn in church from pastor or priest by way of sermons, church school and catechism classes, but desire to form their own opinion on biblical teaching and interpretation and to actively participate in Bible study activities. This probably explains the growing demand for study editions of the Scriptures, multiple translation editions, and/or perhaps revisions of existing translations, with or without study helps. A multiplicity of Bible translations and editions is generally considered an asset for serious Bible study.

3. Types of Revisions

We can distinguish at least three types of revisions:

⁴ Wilt (2003) on p. 64ff discusses this phenomenon in the context of "ritual communication."

- i. Revisions of first New Testaments to be incorporated into first Bibles, and into revisions of first Bibles
- ii. Revisions of New Testaments and Bibles for updating and repurposing
- iii. Revisions of established translations: a) older formal equivalence translations; b) more recent — often functional equivalence — translations

Type i is often taken for granted as a matter of general translation policy. Any new translation needs to be corrected and revised to smooth out any errors or inadvertent infelicities. Revisions of this type tend to require minimal changes. The extent to which a published NT needs revision before it can be incorporated into a first Bible publication often depends on how much time has passed since the publication of the NT and the completion of the translation of the OT. If there has not been a change in translation philosophy, revision of an existing NT usually focuses on the checking of key and technical terms for consistency, the way quotations from and allusions to OT texts have been handled, stylistic issues, etc. It is obvious that, when changes in translation philosophy have been adopted, a revision of an existing NT or of a first OT will have to be of a more radical nature.

Type ii includes revisions that are intended to incorporate new scholarly findings, they may result from changes in orthographies, or they may involve adaptations according to dialectal variation, or adaptations for new audiences (e.g. an edition of an existing translation for TAZI audiences). For example, a Bible may be adapted for use with children, such as the French Children's Bible (2000) from the simple language French *Parole de Vie* (2000), and the Swahili Children's Bible (2002) that has been developed from the Swahili common language *Habari Njema* Bible (1995). Changes that will be carried out on the text will be established according to the intended purpose of the final product.

Regarding Type iii, our assumption in the past has been that established translations in need of revision are always of the formal equivalence type. This is by no means true today. We increasingly encounter revision projects involving functional equivalence translations. An example is the Norwegian Bible Revision, undertaken by the Norwegian Bible Society. In this case a fairly dynamic translation published in 1978 and accepted as a church Bible is being revised at the request of clergy in the church, who expressed concern about the fact that biblical imagery, metaphors and other features of style were sacrificed in translation, given the primacy of comprehensibility and naturalness of language that the translators had opted for. The Norwegian case is described in more detail in case study VI.

A valid question to ask is: when does a revision cease to be a revision and become a new translation? The answer is not easy to give, since we are dealing here with a continuum, rather than two distinct categories. A radical revision and a new translation may not be that far apart! The most distinctive feature of a revision is, of course, that it starts from an existing

translated or earlier revised text. It is important to explain in the preface of a published revision in what areas the bulk of the changes have been made. A helpful model of such a preface is found in the English NRSV translation.

4. Extent of Revision

The prestige of a translation in need of a revision depends to some extent on the type of language involved (international, major regional, national or ethnic). The more local the language, the more pressure there is to preserve its main features and characteristic and the more difficult to sell the idea of an extensive revision.

4. Preliminary Matters

A revision project should be established and should be managed according to the principles of Publishing Process Management (PPM).

a. Prestige/Status of translation to be revised — Need for market research

Before a revision project can be undertaken, it is vital that adequate market research be carried out among the target audience, which may be quite diverse. One needs to investigate in the first place to what extent the translation is being used by the church community using the language. Is the translation being used by both older and younger generations? Is the translation one that has been used for teaching, memorization and recitation over a long period of time? If so, must certain texts be retained unchanged? Must certain familiar vocabulary be kept? Is the translation still actively used in more than just one denomination and if so, is this evident in the national Bible Society's sales records?

The importance of carrying out a proper research needs to be highlighted. A sample questionnaire is attached, and nBSs can adapt it to suit their own research purposes. National Bible Societies that embark on revision projects without proper research run the risk of producing revised versions that are not accepted by the audience.

Research needs to be carried out before as well as during the revision project. As soon as the revised version is published, a system should be set up to receive feedback from the users, and the data needs to be categorized and kept for future corrections or revisions.

Active use of the translation in need of revision is usually also demonstrated in the feedback given to the publishing Bible Society on the quality of the edition, both in terms of content and format. What types of comments have been addressed in letters of complaint and how can they be categorized?

Market research should also pay attention to the use of other translations — if any — in the language in question. If a more contemporary functional equivalence translation has not taken the place of the older formal equivalence translation, what could the reasons be? Is it the prestige of the older translation, its translator(s), or the community or denomination in whose sphere of influence the translation originated? Or is it perhaps the lack of prestige of the new translation, its translators and/or the communities supporting it that have given rise to a new interest in the older translation? It may have been the interconfessionality of the new translation that has led to a lack of wide-spread acceptance. Apart from the people or churches behind the new translation, the critical factor may have been changes in key terminology, transliteration of proper names, the choice of dialect, and/or the applied translation principles that have contributed to its unpopularity or even rejection.

In all this we may notice some discrepancy between the older and younger generations. Younger people speaking the language in question may already have resorted to a contemporary translation in a prestigious national or international language, in which they tend to communicate among themselves more frequently and easily.

The critical questions will therefore be: is there enough of a market for a revision of the older translation among the various layers of the Christian community, across denominations and age groups? Will the churches be willing to set aside competent translators/revisers and contribute to the costs of the project? To what extent has the sociolinguistic situation changed over the years: the attitudes of speakers to the language or dialect entity in which the original translation was done? In some parts of the world colonial language policy resulted in the favoring of certain dialects or even the formation of artificial union language varieties for use in the media. Many of these union translations (e.g., in East Africa) were rejected in post-colonial situations, since none of the language or dialect communities represented in the union language could identify with it. The union language *de facto* was nobody's language.

Other factors need to be considered: is the revision targeted at one of the special audiences? The Malay Shellabear translation was revised and adapted to meet the needs of a TAZI community in the neighboring country, i.e., Indonesia, because it was considered more suitable for this purpose than a more recent translation, due to the way proper names and key terms had been handled by the translator (cf. case study I).

If the original translation was done under the auspices of the national Bible Society and in cooperation with one or more — usually — Protestant denominations, one should carry out research with regard to the potential target audience of the revision: does the translation have potential to serve a wider market than before? Ideally, and as a matter of principle, it should serve an interconfessional market. If an interconfessional revision project is envisaged, there may be implications with regard to the deuterocanonical books. If these books did not exist in the original version, they may have to be translated for the first time or adapted from an existing Roman Catholic or Orthodox version.

In some situations it may be worth considering the option of doing a revision that may end up somewhere in between formal and functional equivalence, in which formal and structural features of the source languages may be preserved, but with less rigidity than in the original translation. Perhaps the principle followed by the NRSV translators might work here: as literal as possible, as free as necessary.

b. Revision principles

The majority of translations currently undergoing revision belong to the more literal type, even though the extent of formal equivalence may vary

from case to case. Formal translations tend to reflect many of the formal features of the biblical source texts and therefore come across as somewhat foreign and unnatural in the minds of mother tongue speakers of the language. Since many of them are old, it is not surprising that they tend to use language contemporary speakers would experience as archaic. But the translated Bible represents a secondary text,⁵ the translated Word of God functioning in church liturgy, and as such, elements of foreignness in the text are considered appropriate and acceptable, at least in the church community.

The critical question to be considered is what factors make up the characteristic features and flavor of the original translation for which it is appreciated and cherished? Can we identify them? Is it the style of the translated text, the way the translators dealt with genre issues, handled imagery or proverbs, or its choice of keywords? In what way would a revision team be able to preserve the positive elements of what the translated text has to offer, while taking the necessary freedom to improve on it in a number of ways?⁶

The users of the version that is to be revised and the anticipated audience for the revised version are important factors in determining what revision needs to be carried out. If the version is used by a variety of denominations, careful research and negotiations will need to be undertaken by Bible Society to ensure that the concerns of all constituencies are met in the new revision. It is neither practical nor advisable to envisage undertaking several different revisions for different constituencies. Different editions can, of course, be prepared to respond to the wishes of different constituencies.

If the established translation is an interconfessional translation, its unique and distinguishing features must be retained. If it has been used primarily by a Protestant or by a Catholic readership, the same holds true. If the revised version is intended to serve an interconfessional audience, careful research must be carried out to determine what changes will make it acceptable to the new audience.

Does the revision have the potential of transforming the older translation into a more contemporary literary translation? To what extent should formal and structural elements of the biblical source texts be represented in the revision? Would it be worth considering the addition of reader's helps like footnotes to help the reader understand literary features of the text that might cause some comprehension problems? Would it be helpful to distinguish between levels of language, text and culture when determining where on the scale of foreignness and naturalness a translation aims to score?⁷

⁵De Vries (2000) describes the secondary nature of translated texts, quoting Hatim and Mason, as "an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication."

⁶Chapters 6 and 7 in Wilt (2003).

⁷De Blois and Mewe (2003), pp. 25-26.

Much will depend on the needs of the target audience. If the revision, once published, is likely to become an important tool for Bible study in seminary or Bible school or church education classes, a number of reader's helps could be created to enhance the understanding of the text and context of the Bible.

Another important issue is the distance between the revision-to-be and an existing dynamic equivalence translation. It may be tempting for the reviser to resort to translation solutions offered by the newer translation. Some may make a lot of sense, but they should not be used in the revision project. An area the Kiswahili revision team struggled with was the transliteration of proper names. It was tempting to borrow a set of names from the dynamic, interconfessional translation based on the Hebrew and Greek forms, but quite distinct from the older transliteration tradition, which for the common biblical names borrowed heavily from Arabic and the Quran. For those who had adopted biblical names from the older translations, the new transliterations would not be acceptable. Borrowing the new name set would also affect the flavor of the old translation.

Many of the older translations that are to be revised date from the pre-interconfessional era and were mostly done by Protestant scholars and missionaries. Unless in a revision project conscious decisions are made to work interconfessionally, one should be cautious and not burden a revision project with issues beyond the scope of the project and its audience.

Caution should also be exercised regarding the adoption of modern exegetical insights.⁸ One needs to balance the gains against the costs. If a revised translation has the potential of becoming an (N)RSV type of translation in the target language, and the target audience is open to the idea of introducing widely accepted results of new scholarship, there is a lot to gain (see Case Studies for examples). If on the other hand such a scholarly approach might result in rejection of the project by the community it is intended for, such a move would be futile and counterproductive. A lot depends on the prestige of the original translation and the relative openness of the community using it.

Some of the older translations leave a lot to be desired in terms of consistency in format and content. Now that we have an ever increasing number of fine computer tools for text processing and consistency checking, we may find problems and inconsistencies in the older translation which researchers and users hitherto were not aware of.

The issue of proper name transliteration was already referred to above. Another area of importance is that of divine names and key terminology. The Tetragrammaton may have to be dealt with in a different way. Some earlier missionary translations opted for loan words for terms that were felt untranslatable in the target language/culture. These solutions may no

⁸ Ogden, chapter 5 in Wilt (2003).

longer be acceptable or necessary and the issues may need to be addressed afresh.

If the revision involves substantial changes in key terms, it will be advisable for the revision team to propose a list of changes, and submit it to the Advisory committee or the heads of churches for feedback and approval.

Due to lack of insights into the target language and culture, errors in the use of honorifics and the language of the royal courts — or the lack thereof — have been made that are in need of correction. Now that mother tongue speakers are doing the translations and revisions, they are more aware of such issues. Published resources are available to help revision teams to deal with this matter.⁹

The involvement of competent stylists in the revision process results in more natural style and therefore also contributes greatly to the acceptability of the revised versions.

Last but not least, we need to pay attention to matters of text division and format. Older translations may reflect inappropriate discourse division in the light of modern exegetical and text-linguistic insights. There are still translation editions in circulation in which every verse starts a new paragraph. There are problems with cover designs and colors that have not been taken seriously. All these issues need to be considered when a revision project is undertaken.

All the above-listed considerations lead to the conclusion that one cannot do a revision without proper training plans and adequate documentation. In fact, the ABS *A Guide for Translators and Revisers* warns, “The processes and problems of revision are in many ways far more complex than those encountered in undertaking an initial translation.”¹⁰ However, training of revisers is not radically different from that of translators. Much depends on the nature and extent of the project in question, e.g., the freedom the revision team is given to modify and restructure their “source text”. This area should be given special attention in training. The team also needs to learn how computer software can help them do a consistent job from the early stages in the revision process.

Perhaps even more importantly, a revision project may be doomed from the outset if there is no agreed policy document or at least a memorandum of understanding on the extent of the revision, the policies to be applied, the procedures to be followed, the tools to be used, and the necessary input in the process of the target community. (See section C for a model.)

c. Text-critical issues

⁹ *TBT* 14:4 [1963], 145-97.

¹⁰ *A Guide for Translators and Revisers of the Holy Scriptures* (1961), pp. 24-25.

As far as text-critical issues are concerned¹¹, it is clear that many of the older translations date from the pre-critical period and do not reflect the latest developments in scholarship. Many NT translations are based on the Greek Majority Text or on a model translation in a prestige language based on the Majority Text. With regard to the OT the same can be said in relation to developments in Septuagint studies and evidence from Qumran. Some churches will be hesitant to accept a critical text edition.

However, if a revision is to serve the needs of the Christian community for more advanced biblical study, one should consider discussing with the target community the desirability of adopting a text-critical approach. Another option would be not to change the textual base of the translation, but rather consider the addition of special footnotes on textual issues.¹² The wording of such footnotes needs to be clear and helpful to the reader. It is important to emphasize that whatever textual tradition is followed is applied consistently and not just eclectically for each individual problem. The local and national tradition with respect to text-critical choices needs to be respected. Exceptional choices should be well argued and documented. If none of the members of a revision are skilled in the area of textual criticism, it is recommendable to follow a good contemporary model, e.g. the English NRSV or the NJPSV (for the OT).

d. Copyright issues

The copyright of many older translations that are considered for revision has expired. It is important to spell out that in such cases a revision, even if the name by which it has been known is maintained, is legally regarded as an independent work. This means that on the copyright page of the new publication one is not required to provide copyright information regarding editions of the original version. However it may be useful to provide this information as a historical summary of the translation.

Some translations, like the Spanish Reina Valera and the French Louis Segond, have been revised a number of times in the course of history and the most recent revision may still be protected by copyright. It should be noted that a translation or revision under copyright cannot be revised without permission of whomever is the registered owner of the intellectual property. In most of our projects this is likely to be the national Bible Society in the country, the United Bible Societies, or another of its member Societies (usually the Bible Society responsible for Bible work in the area at a time the national Bible Society had not yet been established).

The issue has been raised how much a version has to be changed before in legal terms a revision becomes a new translation and consequently deserves an independent copyright and not just an extra date on the

¹¹ Ogden, "Biblical Studies and Bible Translation" in Wilt (2003), pp 153-177.

¹² The UBS Executive Committee in 1993 adopted a resolution (UBSEC 93.27) with regard to translation projects and the Orthodox Churches stating that if the Masoretic Text and the UBS Greek NT were not used as the base texts, significant textual differences between these texts and the chosen base text "must be identified in footnote references, and introductory or postscriptum notes."

original copyright line. This may vary from country to country. We have concluded that for Scripture publications there are no established guidelines and we ourselves have to be the experts. Even when the content of our texts has changed in a substantial way, we should not hesitate to refer to them as revisions, if this is in our interest and that of our target community.

It should also be pointed out that there is no copyright for titles. The old name can be used again unless someone else has registered it as a trademark.

Members of translation and revision teams in the context of UBS, employed for such a purpose, carry out this task on the understanding that the Bible Society responsible for the project will become the owner of the intellectual property on completion of the work. They are expected to sign an agreement to this effect before being employed by the Bible Society or church. It is important to ensure that such a document is legally binding in the country where the project is undertaken. If necessary, legal advice is to be sought on copyright matters.

Bible Societies are encouraged to keep an eye on copyright expiration dates of editions of popular translations that are their intellectual property. It is advisable to plan revisions well in advance of such dates to ensure that they will be on the market and hopefully accepted by the target community before the old versions go into public domain.

For more information on copyright related issues, consult the UBS Program Officer and/or the UBS Copyright Manual.

e. Frequency of revision

Translations that have become popular and that are in need of regular reprints tend to be subjected to more frequent revision than those that are in lower demand. Usually, before a reprint is undertaken, typographical errors and obvious mistakes in the translation are corrected. More substantial revisions are done less frequently, but most likely after 15-25 years. This may be restated as a principle that each generation should have its own version.¹³

It is recommended that Bible Societies — at least for major languages in the country — maintain a translation or revision committee for a given language or version, which meets occasionally to discuss and decide on issues raised by the target community. Bible Societies with an extensive translation program often work with national translation committees made up of board members, the general secretary, and translation staff, which recommend to the full board the approval of translations and revisions for

¹³ “A Statement of Principles” prepared by the Translations Department of the American Bible Society affirms that “for the most part revisions in major languages are justified approximately every fifty years” and that “initial translations into new languages should ordinarily not continue for more than twenty years without revision” (1961, p 24).

publication, after a translation officer has signed them off. Such committees could also process recommendations coming from the individual language committees.

f. Revision priority and resource allocation

Questions of priority and of allocation of resources must be addressed in terms of the national Bible Societies and the churches that they serve. Needs must be established in the national and international context, and the wishes of supporting churches must be recognized. At the same time, each national Bible Society is a member of the global UBS Fellowship which has funding priorities defined by its governing bodies. For example, the UBS Global Board in 2004 drew attention to the importance of initiating new revisions before the expiration of copyrights on older established translations.

5. Issues to be Addressed in Revisions

A variety of issues may need to be addressed in any given revision project, a sampling of which is discussed in the paragraphs below.

a. Archaic words and expressions

Older translations tend to use words and expressions that do not reflect current usage. They have either become obsolete, unnatural, or have changed in meaning or connotation. Some of these terms may be loan words from prestige languages that are not part of the contemporary usage.

Use of such terms or expressions may result in comprehension problems, particularly among the younger generation. This can be a problem in the more traditional churches in which the use of more contemporary translations is either taboo, or considered inappropriate in a liturgical context.

In some older translation vocabulary may not be archaic as such, but the resulting syntax and discourse structure is felt to be unnatural or even artificial. This is the case in the Portuguese Almeida version.

b. Literalisms

Apart from problems with archaic words and expressions, older translations usually represent very literal or at least fairly literal renderings of either the biblical source languages or of formal-equivalence translations in prestige languages in the area. Hebrew or Greek figurative language, biblical imagery and key words were translated literally and consequently the translated text is either not understood or not fully appreciated because of its stylistic foreignness.

c. Translation mismatches

Older translations need revision because at times the translators did not manage to get the correct meanings of technical terms across in the receptor language and culture.

The same applies to theological and other key terms for which at times receptor language terms or expressions were chosen whose semantic components did not match or only partially matched those of the source language terms.

d. Textual base

Many of the older, established translations were done before the days of modern text-critical studies. In many cases the NT was translated from the Majority Text or from base translations in prestige languages based on that tradition. Earlier OT work did not profit from the insights in modern Septuagint and Qumran studies.

e. Exegetical issues

Biblical exegesis and interpretation have been influenced by the results of biblical scholarship. Exegetical positions taken by translators centuries or even decades ago may no longer be tenable and need to be scrutinized. As translation without interpretation is impossible, older, formal equivalence translations may reflect exegetical decisions that will need to be reconsidered.

f. Inclusive language

Older translations tend to be exclusive in relation to gender issues. The undertaking of a revision project offers an opportunity to address this sensitive, but important, issue in accordance with current UBS principles and guidelines.

g. Orthographical and linguistic issues

People worldwide tend to be conservative as far as orthographies are concerned. However, from time to time linguists and language and education experts convince the authorities that existing orthographies are no longer adequate and need updating. In certain socio-political situations a change in orthography marks a shift from a non-roman to a roman script. In such situations literary and educational publications follow suit. In emerging national languages, e.g., Indonesian and Malay, Bible Societies constantly face the challenges of outdated orthographies for the simple reason that education authorities tend to change the rules too often. The publication of the Indonesian New Translation got delayed for almost four years because the authorities were in the process of changing the spelling system.

Nevertheless, the need for a reprint of a prestigious Bible translation due to a change in the official orthography may offer an excellent opportunity for a revision project, particularly if other factors also apply.

Orthographical changes may reflect morphological and phonological changes that have taken place in the language in the course of time, particularly in cases where there is a considerable time gap between the revision and the version on which it is based.

h. Typographical errors

Unfortunately, there are very few Bible editions that were so meticulously proofread that they were published without any typographical errors. We tend to forget that older translations were done BCE (before the computer era), when translators could not benefit from computerized spell checkers and other modern checking tools.

When a translation needs reprinting in the not-too-distant future, the problem of typographical errors, possibly in combination with other above-mentioned factors, may necessitate a proper revision.

i. Figurative and idiomatic language

In the case studies following the general section of this document we list several examples where euphemisms and other figurative devices had not been handled satisfactorily in translation, sometimes because they were translated literally.

j. Need for Reader's Helps

Last but not least, existing translations may not meet the needs of their users unless the publishers show sensitivity to the changing climate described above by offering editions that include a set of reader's helps, e.g., introductions, footnotes, a glossary, maps, tables, charts, etc. The provision of such helps may offer an excellent opportunity for enhancing readers' understanding of the translation.

Footnotes may be provided to deal with textual, exegetical, cultural, historical and geographical issues. The wording of such footnotes should be clear and concise.

6. The Revision Process

a. Inventory and typology of requests for revision

Before a revision project is launched, an inventory should be done of comments and requests with regard to the translation to be revised from individuals, groups, or churches served by the product. When revising new

translations, the translation team should compile a list of errors to be corrected, translation problems to be rectified, and any other modifications that should be made in the first reprint, or in the first corrected version.

Comments and suggestions should be studied and categorized, e.g.: typographical errors, orthographical errors, unusual grammar or style, exegetical problems or errors, archaic words or expressions, problematic or wrong meanings of words, missing text or pages, format issues (color, lay-out, font and type size), requests for additional helps (cross references, footnotes, illustrations, charts and maps, glossary, thematic index or short concordance), etc.

b. Market research involving churches and key people using the translation

On the basis of research carried out in the office, the Bible Society/publisher should convene a meeting in the language area or Bible House with representatives of the churches, missions, and para-church organizations that are users of the translation. In specific situations representatives of Christian or secular publishing houses may be interested or have a stake in a potential revision project. Topics of discussion will include assessment of needs, potential market of revision, extent of revision, potentially sensitive issues, reader's helps, format issues, structure and organization of revision project, selection of revisers, cost and budget.

The research itself is usually carried out by the program and translation officers of the national Bible Society — if these functions exist — in cooperation with the responsible Bible Society's translation officer, and in dialogue with representatives of the target audience (pastors, leaders, teachers, etc.) The research section of the UBS Translation Management System (TMS) will be a useful tool in this exercise.

c. Team selection and liaison with target community

Following agreement with the participating partners and having obtained assurance that adequate funding will be available, a team can be selected, trained and put to work. Eugene Nida underscores the importance of entrusting the revisions of important documents like the Bible to a team, instead of to an individual. There is, he argues, “not only safety in numbers, but also greater balance of decision – though often less creativity – in corporate activity.”¹⁴ The team must be representative of the churches and other stakeholders that are participating in the revision project. If at all possible, the team should be interconfessional. Never should a revision be done by a single person.

In ideal circumstances the team of revisers is selected on the basis of proven talents, skills, and suitability at an earlier training event conducted by a translation officer. Most, if not all, the skills required by a translator also apply to a reviser. Apart from the basic training in translation theory and practice,

¹⁴ *Toward a Science of Translating* (1964), p. 247.

he/she needs to be aware of consistency requirements in a revision project, be a meticulous person and a team player, and realize that a reviser often cannot be as creative as a translator in a new translation project. Given this constraint one could argue that revising an existing translation is a more complex job than doing a translation from scratch. At least basic computer skills are a must. An initial training workshop of at least one week's duration would therefore be a good way to start. It should cover the UBS Guidelines on Revision. During the first year much more follow-up training is needed. In view of the more specialized required skills some teams may require as much as 6-8 weeks training in total! Training topics should include the following:

- Basic translation principles
- Special issues concerning revision
 - Type and scope of revision
 - Maintaining the prestige of the translation to be revised
 - Target audience expectations
 - Linguistic issues
 - Translational issues
 - Text & exegesis
 - Issues of style
- Paratext training
- Team work
- Time management
-

A revision team is usually made up of two to three members, one of whom also functions as project coordinator. They need to work together, at least part of the time in a central office, work full-time and should each have a computer at his/her disposal. Ideally, a stylist should be part of the team from the outset. If this is not feasible, a stylist should be added to the team towards the end of the project. A firm timetable should be imposed on the team. If possible, a small bonus should be offered as an incentive, if the team submits its work on time.

The team of revisers should be assisted by a consultative group representing the different participating churches and other stakeholders in the target community. The role of this group is to give advice on issues raised by the revision team. The team meets occasionally with the advisory group to discuss specific issues that require face-to-face contact. Most of the communication is done by correspondence.

The budget for the project should include provisions for salary payment, meeting expenses, hardware and software, office expenses, etc. It would be helpful to find some way of remunerating members of the consultative group, so that they feel encouraged and remain available as advisors throughout the process.

It is of vital importance that a structure be developed to guarantee proper feedback from the target audience.

d. Liaison with target community

In a revision project we may distinguish two types of communication with the market: lists of proposed changes of words, phrases and structures with examples in context for key people from the various churches cooperating in the project, and an occasional trial publication for a wider public representing the diversity of genre in biblical texts. These trial publications usually have a special preface explaining the purpose of the publication, and a questionnaire to invite concrete feedback from the church community. The key representatives from the community could form a consultative group with whom the revision team may want to meet from time to time to discuss an agenda circulated in advance of the meeting. The group will need some orientation and training involving the translation officer and the team. A good procedure would be to plan a joint training day with members of the revision team as part of the initial workshop.

e. Policy document

It is extremely important for the revision team to have a draft policy document at their disposal before the work commences. It has to be a draft, because it is hard to document all revision decisions at a time when the team has not yet done any revision work. But at least the principles on the basis of which the work is to be carried out have to be established ahead of time. The team also needs to have an idea of the extent of the revision and the major issues that have to be tackled. Ideally the principles and procedures should be laid down in consultation with the consultative group. The more detailed and unambiguous they are, the better for the team. (See section C)

f. Revision practice: a book or two as pilot project

On the basis of the draft document the team can start working. It would be helpful to select two Bible books representing different genres and levels of complexity, and have the team work through these. Ideally this work should be done jointly in a central office, with the help of the right computer tools for which the team must have had adequate training.

On the strength of this first team effort the team should be in a position to review the policy document critically, to further define its revision decisions and to produce lists of revised terminology and expressions, and modifications at the grammatical, syntactic, and discourse levels.

The revised text will be keyed in and checked in Paratext, so that it can be distributed to the translation officer and members of the consultative group.

g. Feedback

Now it is the time for feedback from the consultative group and refinement of the policy document. The team will meet with the group in the presence of the translation officer, after they have had a chance to study the revised books. The team will prepare the agenda and present issues in the policy document

that may need to be reconsidered because they are difficult to implement consistently, they cause additional complications, or they do not go far enough.

h. Revised policy document

Following the discussions with the consultative group on the pilot project and the draft document, the team should be in a position to revise the document on policies and procedures in consultation with the Bible Society's translation officer. This document is now publishable as a working document and can be distributed to whomever is interested in the background of the project. (See section C)

i. Continuation of the revision work

Work can proceed after it has been agreed how the workload will be shared by members of the team. The work would normally be assigned to team members on a book by book basis. Alternatively, the work process could be structured on the basis of revision topics or issues with regard to the entire text corpus. Whichever approach is taken, it makes sense to group the books by genre (e.g. Deuteronomistic corpus, historical books, prophetic books, apocalyptic texts, synoptic gospels, epistles, etc.). Tasks should be assigned by the project coordinator in consultation with the managing Bible Society and the translation officer assigned to the project. By this time the team will have fully implemented the policy decisions as formulated in the working document. Issues the document does not fully or satisfactorily address should be noted and discussed in the next team meeting.

It has been suggested that group peer reviewing could be a good way of enhancing natural style: one person would read the revised draft aloud, while the other team members make comments or take notes. In this way things might be picked up that would go unnoticed when peer reviewing is limited to checking printed drafts.

Unlike in a translation project, it is not necessary for the team to share drafts of each revised book with external reviewers. Information sharing with members of the consultative group would usually be sufficient to ensure involvement of the target community and in the acceptance of the revision.

j. Publication of trial and regular editions

As revision work proceeds and revisers improve their skills and gain more experience, the Bible Society-publisher should plan occasional trial editions of books or sets of books in the new revision for distribution among the target community. The goal is to familiarize members of participating churches and others interested in the project with the fruits of the labors of the revision team and to further test the acceptability of the revised text. The release of trial editions should be announced and promoted in whatever medium possible.

The first one or two trial editions may contain explanatory and promotional material and questionnaires. As soon as it has become clear that the project is

well established, regular editions (selections, portions, Testaments) can be planned.

k. Duration of the work

On the average a NT revision can be completed in 1 year, a revision of the entire Bible in 3-5 years. This depends, of course on the nature and extent of the revision.

7. Text Processing and Checking – Use of computer tools

a. Available computer tools

Paratext

Paratext offers the ideal environment for translation processing and consistency checking. It enables the revision team to process the revised texts in relation to the original translation, the biblical source texts, model translations, handbooks and other reference tools. All the necessary revision functions are available to the reviser in a single user interface. Both the team and the translation officer can carry out quality checks in relation to content and format. Drafts for the team and the consultative group can be printed in the required format. Eventually, a generic textbase will be produced that can be output in the desired typesetting format.

The ‘Compare Texts’ function in Paratext allows the reviser to see the changes made to the text. The revised text can be compared with the original, and additions, changes or omissions can be marked in different colors.

Adapt-it

Adapt-it is a versatile, handy tool designed and supported by Bruce Watters, an SIL worker in Papua New Guinea, for language or dialect adaptation, back-translation and glossing. It also offers great potential for the kind of revision projects we are discussing in this guidelines document. Unlike CARLA, which cannot operate without an underlying grammatical and lexical database of the target language, Adapt-it builds a knowledge base as the adaptation or revision work proceeds. The program ‘remembers’ changes the reviser implements and reminds him/her at subsequent occurrences of the term or phrase in question. The underlying knowledge base is fully editable by the user.

The program forces the reviser to aim at the highest level of consistency, even though revision decisions remain the prerogative of the user.

Both Paratext and Adapt-it can be used simultaneously for different purposes, since they both handle a textbase in the same format (standard format marked).

b. Text processing

Option #1: Paratext only

In option #1 the entire text revision process is carried out in Paratext. The best way to use Paratext in revision projects is the following:

Install the original text to be revised as a version, if it is not there already. This original text should be made non-editable.

Create a new version with a distinct name, copy all books from the original text-base into the directory in which the new version files are located, make the new version editable (tick the 'Editing Enabled' box under 'Project Properties and Settings'). Click the 'Compare Texts' function (under 'Tools'), select the original text as the 'older text' and the revised version-to-be as the 'newer text'. As desired, the biblical source texts and other helpful translation models can be loaded and consulted.

Option #2: Combination Paratext and Adapt-it

In option #2 most of the processing is done in Adapt-it while consistency checking is done in Paratext.

The original version and the editable copy are installed and loaded as described above. Adapt-it will be started and the editable copy of the working text is loaded after it has been copied to an Adapt-it sub-directory. (It is not wise to process one and the same text in two different programs.)

The text processing is done in Adapt-it, which is fairly easy to do. Basically, the program enables the user to run through the text word by word and the program remembers the choices that were made and builds a special database. Sequences of words and entire phrases can be saved in cases of idiomatic expressions, grammatical constructions, etc. The software enhances consistency in the revision process.

Once the basic revision work is done, the revised book(s) should be copied to the Paratext sub-directory in which the revised version resides, and made to overwrite what was there. From this point onwards Paratext can be used for consistency checking.

c. Consistency checking

By now the revision team must have processed one or more books and established a basis for categorization of changes made (syntactic, grammatical, lexical). This is the right moment to start putting together a list of changes that correspond with what has been agreed upon in the revision policy document. For users of Adapt-it, the (editable) knowledge base built by the software might be a good starting point. It is vitally important that the list gets updated as the work proceeds. The project coordinator has the responsibility for sharing updated lists with the team members and interested members of the consultative group. If this is not done and communicated properly, the result

will be highly inconsistent books and an extremely tedious task of minimizing the mess at an advanced stage.

In Paratext the revisers and project coordinator will carry out searches of words and phrases in order to check if consistency has been observed, where necessary. Consistent changes can be carried out with “search” and “replace”.

The new checking lists that are built into Paratext greatly simplify and enhance the consistency checking process. The ‘Biblical Terms’ function is useful for checking the consistency of terms rendered. There are separate checking tools for proper names, key terms (presently NT only), OT quotations in the NT, OT and NT parallel passages, rhetorical questions, inclusive and exclusive pronouns, metaphors, etc. Thorough checking can therefore be carried out, ensuring that the revised text is as consistent and accurate as possible.

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SECTION C: MODEL DOCUMENT ON REVISION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- 1.0 The target audience is the mother-tongue speakers of the receptor language.
- 2.0 The source text to be used for the OT is the latest edition of the Biblia Hebraica, and for the NT the latest edition of the UBS Greek NT. It is noted that in some Orthodox traditions the Septuagint serves as the base text for the OT.

Accepted scholarly translations may be used as model texts. In English, the RSV and NRSV would be acceptable as formal correspondence models and GNT and CEV as functional equivalence models.

- 3.0 The following resources will be made available to the team: Commentaries, UBS Handbooks, Bible dictionaries, encyclopaedias and other materials that are based on sound biblical scholarship. Most reference tools will be made available in electronic format as part of the Paratext program, which also offers the editing and checking environment for the project.
- 4.0 The language of the revision should remain within the constraints of the standard language, as made binding legally by the government of the country.
 - 4.1 The scope/extent of the revision work will comprise the following elements: Correction of spelling errors
 - 4.2 Fixing mistranslations
 - 4.3 Replacing archaisms
 - 4.4 Etc., etc..... (customize as needed)

5.0 Personnel

- 5.1 The team will be comprised of two or three full-time revisers, one of whom will serve as the coordinator. The team members, who will be appointed by the national Bible Society at the recommendation of the TO, should represent the various churches and stakeholders. They are responsible for preparing first drafts, commenting on each other's drafts, preparing revised drafts, reviewing and incorporating comments of the consultative group. The project coordinator prepares the final electronic manuscripts in consultation with the Translation Officer (TO) with assistance from the CAP officer assigned to the project. The revisers will be expected to read camera-ready proof before the final printing. A written report will be submitted monthly to the

NBS and the TO regarding the hours and the amount of work accomplished.

A stylist will be hired to carry out the stylistic revision of the entire corpus. Any revision at this stage will be subject to the approval of the team and of the TO.

- 5.2 An advisory consultative group, representing the various churches and stakeholders, will also be formed, initiated by the national Bible Society at the recommendation of the TO, in consultation with the church leaders. Its main task is to provide feedback on issues raised by the revision team.

6.0 Procedures

- 6.1 First, the coordinator assigns different books of the Bible or topics for revision to each member of the team.
- 6.2 Then, the drafter exchanges drafts with another reviser(s). This draft represents Stage 1.
- 6.3 The commented draft is given back to the original drafter who then prepares the revised or Stage 2 draft and forwards it to project coordinator, who maintains the ranking text on his computer.
- 6.4 The coordinator sends a list of issues on which the team would like to receive advice from the consultative group to members of this group. This could include a copy of the Stage 2 draft, but does not have to.
- 6.5 The feedback received from members of the consultative group is then presented by the coordinator to the team of revisers who may accept or reject their advice. The result is Stage 3. Unresolved problems will be discussed in meetings with the TO.
- 6.6 Final decision on the revision rests with the revisers in consultation with the TO. The Stage 3 draft is then finalized after being checked by the TO. The TO will then recommend the translation to the Bible Society Board for publication. The project coordinator submits the electronic text to the CAP officer, who runs all the computer checks assigned to the project. The final electronic manuscript represents Stage 4.

7.0 Copyright

- 7.1 The translators or the revision team agree to relinquish their claim to copyrights on the translation to the Bible Society as part of the initial contract arrangements.