

TEN (POSSIBLY) MISTAKEN NOTIONS ABOUT PRODUCING A STUDY BIBLE: SOME THINGS I HAVE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

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Introduction

This article is intended to raise practical concerns about the production of study Bibles. I assume that readers are familiar with the basic concept of a study Bible (SB), and also that most readers know roughly how a SB is produced. Therefore, I will consider some of the more specific aspects of the process. I have been working with the Chewa SB project in Malawi for over ten years and five years with the Tonga project of Zambia, and my knowledge is largely based on personal experience, plus what I have read and heard from others.

My remarks and suggestions in this article do not necessarily reflect the history of either of these SB projects, nor the abilities or practices of the participants in them. Further, the recommendations and cautions implied by these ten “mistaken notions” may not be universally valid outside of my own situation in south-central Africa. I put them forward merely to serve as a springboard for further thought and discussion of the complex issues involved in this increasingly important aspect of Bible translation and Scripture engagement.

Ten claims that may need correction

The misconceptions expressed here (not necessarily in order of importance) about the organization and implementation of a study Bible project will be clarified and corrected in the following discussion under each section. I will spend more space on the first claim because it lays the foundation for the remaining nine.

1. You must have a team of Ph.D.s to head up the editorial-production process.

Translation consultants (TCs) seek to assemble a “dream team” for every project. But the reality is often more modest. If the ideal committee members exist in the community, they are often not available for Bible translation work. And even if an ideal team is eventually employed, they may not live up to expectations either individually or as a team.

My ideal “editorial committee” for a study Bible might consist of three scholars having Ph.D.s in Old Testament, New Testament, and the target language (TL), including a Catholic priest and at least one female university professor. But assembling such an impressive team is just the first challenge. A much greater obstacle to success would be the group’s inability to function together in actual practice. The following are three typical barriers to progress:

- A Chewa proverb says: *Atambala awiri salira m’khola limodzi* “Two roosters do not crow in the same chicken house.” In other words, having several exceptional individuals involved in one task may result in rivalry and competition for status, rather than productive cooperation.
- Some Ph.D.s, having reached the assumed pinnacle of success in their discipline, tend to rest upon their laurels. They can lack the desire and ability to produce high-quality materials in writing on a long-term basis. Perhaps their doctoral research was too specialized, and they cannot communicate on a more practical, popular level, especially in their own mother tongue. An intellectually more “hungry” and energetic M.Th., or even B.Th., with a solid academic background and good vernacular communication skills may be a more productive team-player.
- A Ph.D. (especially a female) may be a rarity in the TL community. As a result, she is usually in high demand for many activities, secular and religious. Her expert advice is often sought by churches or other educational, social, and academic institutions. Unfortunately, if she is participating in a SB project, it may get only the leftovers of her intellectual resources. If several team members are similarly involved, the project may stall completely.

If the “dream team” does not materialize, how can we best create an efficient and effective editorial committee? In my opinion there are two critical requirements for success: a basic *minimum* in terms of human qualities, and an effective production *method*.

As far as the *minimum* goes, there are three essential attributes for an editorial team:

- Compatibility, for no matter how qualified and productive individuals may be, if they cannot get along as a group, their endeavors will be frustrated.
- Sustained commitment to the project over a long period of time, in often less than ideal conditions.
- Productive competence, the active ability to access acquired knowledge and to generate acceptable draft notes, corrected reviews, or final copies consistently and in a timely manner.

Having a satisfactory *method* means that teams need an integrated set of *working procedures*, building on strengths and compensating for weaknesses in individual team member’s abilities. Varied team situations will naturally result in different options for functioning effectively. Here are several possibilities, based on the standard model of a full-time committee of three scholars.

- A single gifted writer-editor composes the notes, based on research prepared by the other two colleagues, who also review all first drafts and test the formally or informally published results among the target audience.
- The editorial team members all work together (one acting as text keyboarder) to compose the notes and other study helps. This is not a recommended method since it tends to be time-consuming and inefficient.
- Each editor drafts notes for allocated books of the Bible, and all review and correct their colleagues' work. This requires regular team meetings to record, discuss, research, and resolve outstanding problems.
- The committee commissions qualified outside "contributors" to prepare the draft notes for a book that they may be specialists in. The editorial committee then reviews, corrects, and standardizes these drafts. This option might work better as an auxiliary plan, one that complements what the editorial committee is able to do on its own.

The most essential person is a proficient *team leader*, "editor-in-chief," or "project coordinator." This person should be respected as a scholar by the other editors, but also capable to plan, prioritize, solve problems, encourage colleagues, and keep the whole program on schedule.

In this section, I have concentrated on the full-time editorial committee. But like any successful team, this one requires *back-up*, both for advice and support and also, if possible, for the production of study notes on particular books by specialists in the field. *Review committees* need to examine and evaluate drafts that the editorial committee produces. Additional *technical consultants* may be co-opted for special purposes, such as source language exegetes and TL-speaking stylists or grammarians.

2. *Mother-tongue scholars will automatically be able to generate contextualized SB notes for their people.*

We all have experienced examples that would disprove this assumption, in either a religious or secular field of communication. The ability to really *communicate* with clarity, accuracy, impact, and appeal in one's mother tongue is a gift that is relatively rare. Well-educated Christian professionals and academics sometimes have difficulty in communicating with people on a "common language" level.

Thus, students and scholars in a multilingual context, striving to perfect their performance in academic discourse in a foreign language, may ignore or even forget their roots in terms of both language and literature, including "orature," that is, their oral traditions. The aptitude for effective communication requires the ability to select and incorporate contextually appropriate TL oral art forms such as proverbs, riddles, folktale allusions, song lines, idioms, figures of speech, and issues of local concern. Scholars often neglect these vernacular verbal skills or mistakenly suppose that their use in a SB might diminish its "scholarly" nature.

Such contextualization applies not only to the form of language but even more importantly to the content. What then does it mean to contextualize a study Bible? It involves the preparation of notes with a particular target audience and

type of application in mind, considering both user and use. This is perhaps the toughest task of all, to generate (or adapt) notes to fit the interests, needs, values, world-view, and goals of the target group in their specific sociocultural and religious situation. Like Bible translators, Scripture note composers are generally born, not made—naturally possessing the ability to communicate with power and relevance in their mother-tongue. Every editorial committee needs at least one such member—and her colleagues must be appreciative, sympathetic, and supportive of her creative pragmatic insights and idiomatic style when composing (or revising) notes and other helps.

I have discussed elsewhere (Wendland 2004: 113-19) ten different types of study notes and will not review them here. But *all* supplementary helps must be composed with the primary TL readership in mind (see #5 below)—anticipating not only what they want and need to know, but also their capacity to access and apply the different kinds of information. It is possible to improve one's innate communication skills through practical, on-the-job experience, including audience testing. It would be good if at least one team member has already a significant amount of pastoral service time, ministering out among the people. This person (and others on review committees) can ensure that only information deemed important (in terms of the biblical message) and pertinent (in terms of the local cultural setting) is included in the SB text supplements.

3. Editors representing widely divergent denominations will never agree on the wording of SB notes.

One might think that this potentially fatal problem should be dealt with at the outset of a project. But how? By involving only those churches that are theologically very close or compatible—e.g., Episcopal, Evangelical, Charismatic, traditional main-line Protestant cliques? Not at all. Such a restrictive policy would probably create more serious problems of credibility and acceptability among the wider Christian constituency. Churches left out of the production process may feel offended and not buy the study Bible. The same holds true for review committees and technical advisers: exclusion on doctrinal grounds or even for practical reasons (“operational efficiency”) will likely reduce the success of the project.

On the other hand, a team of mature, capable editors can learn to interact with little tension through prolonged contact. The key person here is the coordinator, who must be skilled in getting colleagues to focus on their larger common goal, and not to dwell on individual differences. By practicing the art of compromise, the group learns to resolve their inevitable disagreements. Alternatively, they may agree to disagree and to compose brief alternative wordings that may be incorporated within the same textual note. Another possibility is to refer major or contentious issues to a larger “select review committee” to decide. This emphasis on cordial dialogue and collegial debate must be strongly supported by the project's administrative committee which oversees the work (see #7 below).

Along with effective harmonious working patterns, the editorial committee also needs to have procedures for problem-solving and conflict-resolution. This

may involve the use of popular opinion surveys to obtain a more broadly-based audience opinion on disputed key terms, interpretations, applications, or formats (see #10 below). Methods of doing this include occasional questionnaires sent to selected respondents (ideally via the internet), a periodic project newsletter that includes a readers' feedback page, canvassing opinion through radio or TV programs, or using researchers to bring the committee's questions directly to the churches. Not all of these options may be available in a given situation, and those that are must be tested for their effectiveness in settling differences of opinion and for their cultural appropriateness within the user community.

4. You can simply translate or adapt the notes of a standard study Bible.

This would seem to be an easy way to go. There are many good study Bibles available in major languages—certainly in a language of wider communication (LWC) known to most members of any editorial committee. In English, GNB, NIV, and CEV study Bibles are already popular in many countries and often sold by national Bible Societies. The NET Bible (New English Translation) is even available on the internet. This could lead to the false assumption that the composition of study Bible notes is a relatively simple process: Find a translator with good English who knows the principles of meaningful translation, and translate the study notes directly from some LWC text into the TL, making only necessary adjustments to fit the linguistic characteristics of the TL.

I cannot agree with this correspondence-based approach as a general procedure implemented for the sake of expedience or cost-efficiency. Readers and settings are quite different the world over, and this should guide our policy of SB production. In my situation, for example, technical detail suited to Western readership or complex text-critical issues would quickly overload the capacity of the readers and lead to frustration. Too much complexity and irrelevant or ambiguous material soon produces disappointment and discouragement, especially for inexperienced readers. People's abilities to process complex texts differ and the range of allowable difficulty for a specific TL group should be researched in advance (see #10).

But a general caution does not mean complete prohibition. The range of published SBs available is a valuable resource to be used carefully and appropriately for a particular study Bible project. An editorial committee should definitely consult all suitable published materials, without developing an over-dependence on the model(s). What follows is a simplified set of guidelines that might be adapted to fit the unique personnel and circumstances of a given project.

- a. Read through an entire chapter of a biblical book in the TL, NIV, and GNB several times, making notes of any apparent differences in interpretation among the translations and potential problem areas or points of special interest for your intended readers.
- b. Analyze the chapter with respect to its content, structure, main themes and theological ideas, important passages, and communication goals.

- c. Work through the chapter again looking for the sort of information needed to enable your target group to better understand the form, content, and intent of the TL text. What information would be most relevant for them? And what would *not* be relevant? (See Harriet Hill's article in this issue.) Published SBs may be a guide in this exercise. Make a rough draft of study notes, sectional introductions, or other supplementary aids.
- d. Polish the first draft in an appropriate vernacular style. Compose your text in a clear, interesting, and idiomatic manner so as to attract TL readers and engage their minds as well as their hearts. Readers' helps should not be written at a level of formality or difficulty greater than that which was used in the translation of Scripture itself.
- e. Record all revisions and corrections, stylistic as well as exegetical, that need to be made to the TL translation. These must be categorized and carefully saved for application, either in the current study edition or in some future revision of the TL Bible.
- f. Compare your TL materials with those found in other SBs. Consult the Translator's Handbook or a Bible dictionary to ensure that all information essential for the readers has been included. Additional commentaries need to be referenced only for special exegetical problems. Select from the mass of information available the most vital, setting-sensitive issues, in line with the project's commission and purpose.
- g. Carefully read aloud through the entire text—Bible translation plus notes—before moving on to the next chapter. Has it been sufficiently contextualized for the target audience? Are the notes readable and understandable when heard?

5. *A good study Bible will cater for the entire TL constituency.*

It is not that this is an invalid goal, but it may turn out to be too general for many projects. The danger is that by attempting to prepare something useful for every sub-group in the TL constituency, you might end up serving none very well. There are smaller segments within any society that vary from each other in terms of their needs, desires, abilities, and goals. The task of an organizing committee then is to identify as precisely as possible the particular socio-educational and religious sector that will be best served by the planned study Bible. Other groups may well use and benefit from the text, but the editors need a particular readership to focus on so that they can both compose and evaluate their materials effectively. "For whom?" is a question that must guide study note composers, as much as it does Bible translators.

For the Chewa and Tonga SB projects, the target group has been specified, roughly, as follows:

- Poorly- to moderately-educated clergy, lay leaders, evangelists, catechists, and school teachers who have the responsibility of preparing sermons, talks, or Scripture study lessons;
- Persons who are largely monolingual in the TL and lack sufficient reading competency in some major language of wider communication;

- Leaders who have no access to exegetical resources in the TL;
- Better educated lay people who wish to augment their knowledge of Scripture by regular study (cf. Acts 17.11).

This specification of a target group highlights the need for comprehensive guidelines for the project. All churches and agencies involved should agree on an explicit statement of the project's terms of reference *before* the editorial committee begins work. This formally approved job commission should include: the project's primary purpose (*skopos*) and target group, a statement of general principles and operating procedures (though the committee would need to develop more specific ones), the project's organizational and management structure (including sub-committees, such as fund-raising, public relations, community education, product research and testing), a proposed annual budget, and a projected timetable for completing the work in measurable stages.

This foundational document must be periodically reviewed (e.g., once a year) with respect to any weaknesses manifested and major targets achieved. The official text of this *brief* would thus be revised, if and when needed, so as to keep it current and prominent for all project participants, especially the editorial committee, whose performance should also be regularly appraised in terms of whether they have achieved their annual goals.

6. A study Bible project will quickly generate widespread support among the TL community, due to its perceived prestige.

This hope will not necessarily materialize. Why? First, such an interconfessional endeavor may seem too demanding (see #8), in terms of both cost and time. In this day of tight budgets, organizations are reluctant to take on complex long-term projects. Certainly a SB project will require a significant commitment of time and of human and financial resources. However, this cost of development must be weighed against the value of the final product and the needs of Scripture consumers. The cost of a SB project would normally be too much for an individual denomination, and so working together is the only viable solution.

Another obstacle to popular support is the reluctance of some churches to assign any of their most qualified people to the project. Just as with Bible translation projects, churches are often unwilling to offer their best performers to an ecumenical enterprise and, instead, offer clergy who don't fit elsewhere, are under-achievers, or close to retirement. Ironically, the group's most capable educators, writers, and communicators are often inefficiently utilized, in administration or management.

There may also be doctrinal barriers to cooperation. Church leaders may be suspicious of potential doctrinal "contamination" if their group participated in a broad ecumenical venture involving not just the text of Scripture, but a mini-commentary (see #3). This factor might be too great to overcome initially, but with time and patience some of the more conservative churches may be persuaded to become involved.

A Chewa proverb states: *Konza kapansi kuti kam'mwamba katsike* "Prepare what is down below so that what is up above might descend." A timid kitten up a tree may be coaxed down when it sees its companions being petted and fed at the base. Some church leaders may come to see how well the SB is being managed and be enticed to join, perhaps by the publication of a trial portion. They may realize how much all Christians will benefit from such an enriched edition of the Bible, and agree to participate so that they can influence the final outcome. A lot depends on the history of recent interconfessional Bible translation work: If that was a very positive experience, then it should be less difficult to generate support for a SB edition, especially if some of the former academic and administrative personnel can continue with the new undertaking.

The concept of a SB will need to be "sold" and its products advertised among the projected audience. A well-prepared brochure and newsletter are useful tools, but they must be sustained—a newsletter should not lapse after just one or two issues. This task should preferably not be an editorial committee effort, lest it take up too much of their time. Rather, capable volunteers or a select subcommittee of the administrative committee should undertake the production and distribution of the newsletter, with regular contributions from the editorial committee, such as reports on important issues, questionnaires requesting feedback about key terms, and other issues.

Another vital method of popularizing a SB project and soliciting wider support is through a succession of trial publications. If work begins in the New Testament, one of the gospels is a likely first candidate. However, there would be distinct advantages in choosing a smaller text to begin with—for example, Philemon or Titus (or Ruth and Jonah in the Old Testament). This would introduce a sample of the SB much more quickly to the market for people to evaluate and react to. A short book would be cheaper to publish and could even be distributed free. For example, Philemon could be given to instructors at theological institutions for review as part of their class assignment in NT studies (or biblical Greek). This might even influence some teachers or advanced students to participate as technical reviewers for other drafted books.

7. The national Bible Society can easily organize and effectively administer a study Bible project.

Though this may work well in some situations, in my experience it is not the most efficient means of project management and administration. This is no reflection of the competence of national Bible society (NBS) personnel but is purely a matter of logistics. NBS staff are often heavily committed to existing assignments, and can handle occasional extras but not the demands of a multifaceted long-term project. Furthermore, they may be removed—geographically, linguistically, or sociologically—from the center of any given project. Thus supervising a far-off project might be a matter of "out of sight, out of mind," or "if and when" (I can get to it).

But there is a much more important reason for establishing a locally-based administrative committee, made up of church leaders and others who first formulated the project. The right to manage the program and the responsibility of supporting it create a strong sense of ownership for the community concerned.

The following is a listing of some of the special functions that such an administrative committee might be expected to perform:

- Draw up, discuss, approve, monitor, and, when necessary, revise the SB project's job commission;
- Identify and introduce more participants, individuals as well as entire church bodies, to the ministry of SB production: TL specialists, researchers, exegetes, note drafters, reviewers, etc.;
- Meet regularly to evaluate progress, perform an annual performance review, resolve any administrative problems (including employment issues, personal crises, or disciplinary cases);
- Raise funds to "top up" staff salaries and honoraria, or to purchase equipment and supplies, to sponsor workshops and informational meetings, etc.
- Assist with more extensive product testing and intensive target audience opinion sampling;
- Administer all project expenses, maintain financial records, monitor and report on the annual budget;
- Promote the SB project in any other way possible within the wider TL community, e.g., public relations work, distribution and sales, education, prayer support, etc.

The composition of the committee must suit local circumstances and expectations, but would probably include a chairperson and a vice-chairperson (especially if the chairperson is often out of town), secretary, treasurer, plus chairpersons for various sub-committees. It may take special effort to find qualified women to serve, but it is essential to do this. The relationship between the project's administrative and editorial committees, on the one hand, and the NBS, on the other, needs to be carefully and explicitly set out. The editorial committee must not feel that they are being micro-managed, but the scholarly program of SB preparation will not progress smoothly if they must carry out all of the project's administration and promotional work as well.

8. Setting strict goals and deadlines is neither necessary nor possible for so large, complex, and sensitive a venture as a SB project.

Certainly a comprehensive SB project is large, complex, and sensitive, more so than the original Bible translation itself, since a fixed sacred text is not being used as the guiding norm. However, this does not mean that it is not possible or necessary to set goals and deadlines. Quite the opposite—more people and components must be coordinated and encouraged to cooperate for the program to work successfully.

If there are no checks and balances maintained, there is a temptation to lose focus, and thus waste time and hinder progress. It becomes too easy for the

editors to major in minors—to get tied up in tasks that others should be doing or tasks that should be handled as quickly as possible. When completion targets start slipping from sight, the editorial committee will soon learn to prioritize. If this is learned near the beginning of the project, editors can thereafter work more efficiently towards a timely completion of their work.

All other things being equal, a reasonable target is to complete the NT study materials in four years and the OT materials in another six years: a decade in total. Without such a timetable, the editors may get too deeply engaged in their research, leaving little time to write up what they have learned. As suggested above, much useful material is available as a model, not to be slavishly copied (#4), but as a stimulus and source of basic biblical facts. Too much time surfing the commentaries may also result in the editors producing notes which are too complex or difficult for their audience.

The team's progress may be monitored by a checklist or flow chart that specifies the various tasks or stages that must be accomplished sequentially for each book of the Bible, from initial research to final testing (see section 1, "The Production Process," of the UBS document *Preparing a Study Edition of the Scriptures*). Almost certainly self-monitoring won't work. In a large project like this, optimum performance will be maintained if a common approach to management procedures is agreed on. Rather than penalizing under-performance, it is more effective to award annual bonuses for achievements beyond the target. Team members who cannot maintain the expected standard should be either re-assigned to a different role (e.g., from composer to reviewer) or retired.

This may sound harsh, but two things must be kept in mind: First, poor performance of a key player affects the entire team, and can cripple the project for years. In a three-member editorial committee team, if one editor does not fulfill the targets for composing and reviewing notes, the book cannot proceed to stage two, no matter what the other two editors have already done or plan to do. Or one editor may do his work so poorly that it must always be redone. These obstacles to progress should not be tolerated too long. Of course it is taken for granted that any case of persistent under-achievement will be dealt with in an appropriate and supportive Christian manner, both for the common good and for the benefit of the individual concerned. This is another reason for having a local administrative committee closely involved with the work of producing a SB (see #7): The elders on this committee (there should always be some!) will know best how to deal with one of their own negligent or delinquent sons or daughters.

9. Paratext software makes the preparation of SB notes a relatively simple, straightforward process.

This surprising "mistaken assumption" may present an unprepared SB editorial committee with a significant problem. This is not about faults within the Paratext program itself—only the deficiencies of those who use it. Suppose an editorial committee has completed a fully reviewed, final-draft copy of their first book—probably using Microsoft Word or some similar format. Now they want to publish

a trial study edition to test the market for their new Scripture product. But here is the difficulty: Word does not work! The expository notes and other helps must first be introduced into the Paratext environment. You might think it simple (as I did): just copy and paste the notes from Word into Paratext. Not so simple (I found out): there are many new standard format codes to be incorporated to distinguish the different types of auxiliary information on offer at various points on the printed page (including sidebars and special inserts)—for example, various categories of footnotes, cross-references, illustrations, book and sectional introductions, maps, time/event lines, charts/diagrams, glossary entries, special topical or key word studies, and so on.

So why not designate the project keyboarder or one editorial committee member to do this? First, there is often no “project keyboarder” as all translation staff are expected to key their drafts directly into Paratext. Then why won’t this work? Not many older (middle-aged) academics and biblical scholars (as are most of our note composers) are proficient keyboarders, and keying study notes in Paratext requires better than average skills. Even if such doubly-skilled individuals were available in the TL community, they may not be willing to serve at the relatively low salary level usually offered to a full-time SB editor.

Several possible solutions come to mind:

- Tutor one editorial committee member, or even the entire team, to reach the required level of computer competence, either within the NBS, or through an external training program. (My experience tells me that this plan would not be likely to achieve much success.)
- Reserve a place on the editorial committee for later appointment of someone who does have the necessary qualifications in both biblical studies and computer skills.
- Hire a professional keyboarder as a fourth member of the editorial committee to insert the team’s study notes, etc., into Paratext with all the proper formatting.
- Simplify the Paratext format to make it easier for the editorial committee to apply it while simultaneously carrying out the strenuous mental activity of study note composition.

Of these, the last option appears to be the most promising. In response to our appeals from Africa (and undoubtedly elsewhere), UBS programming experts are currently working towards such a solution. In response to a recent request for an update, I received this reply:

In May 2009 a small group of developers, authors, and publishers/typesetters met in Dallas to discuss the way forward for supporting study Bible authoring and publishing. The result was a documented proposal for features to be added to Paratext 7.1 to support authoring study material, and features to be added to a new version of Publishing Assistant to support the typesetting process. The development of authoring and publishing tools will be done together, so that the tools interact well. (Klassen 2010)

The new system should allow for various options to be included in a project's SB draft. Thus a simpler format may be chosen during the project's early stages while the editors are learning how to compose and key-in at the same time (though there would be a resulting loss in diversity of helps that can be offered). This would also permit a smoother merging of Paratext files with draft copies being printed out as Word files for testing with target readers. At some later stage in the project, the editorial and administrative committees could upgrade and adopt the fuller, more extensive method of coding their various helps.

10. Research sampling and product testing becomes too complicated to carry out for a SB project.

This is closely related to misconception #8, and the response must be similar: Research and testing is even more essential in the case of a study Bible project for two reasons: (a) it involves more individual components to be packaged together in the final product; and (b) there is no "original text" for the supplementary notes to adhere to (see #4). So there is more room for debate about the type of content, the style of wording, and the format in relation to the Bible text. An accurate idea of target audience opinion must be obtained before, during, and after publication of a SB: What information do readers want to see included? How well is the job commission being fulfilled? And how effectively do people actually use the resulting SB?

Sampling audience opinion or testing completed drafts is no simple matter—not if accurate, credible, and useful results are desired. The principles of investigative design and implementation require time, effort, and expertise, including "research into how to do research." Without going into details (for which see Hill 2006 and Hill and Hill 2008, 255-59), I simply point out that a suitable plan must be set up to examine and evaluate the major goals and objectives of the project. According to Smith (1992, 96, 348):

Goals give broad direction, but should be reduced to a series of objectives. Objectives are the steps that lead towards the accomplishment of a goal. They are relevant to the goal, measurable, time-limited, and manageable with expected resources, and they require a significant effort to achieve. Objectives provide a standard against which to evaluate work and consider desirable changes so that the overall goal will be reached. . . .

Six segments are present in good research design:

1. Defining the audience
2. Identifying program goals and objectives
3. Establishing criteria for measuring achievement
4. Determining what measurements will be used
5. Selecting sampling procedures
6. Interpretation of the findings

I would add a seventh component: Assessment of the overall research enterprise.

A certain amount of initial trial and error may be necessary for the administrative committee to determine the most suitable method(s) of implementing such research design. The quality of the results will depend a great deal on the human and financial resources available.

The following is a list of some of the important questions that have either been or still need to be investigated for the Chewa and/or Tonga SB projects:

- What should be the average amount of notes allowed per page? Is the standard 25% too little if the print size of notes should have to be increased for legibility where readers do not have access to good eye care facilities?
- Should the SB be published as individual portions or sets of books (e.g., four Gospels, Pauline Epistles)? This allows more notes to be included in a given publication, but it would not be a complete annotated Testament or Bible. Alternatively, book sets might be initially published with complete notes, which are then condensed for a full Testament/Bible edition.
- How much contextualization to the TL setting should be included in notes? Does the audience prefer more exposition or more life-application?
- How much should the base translation be revised as the editorial committee proceeds: only clear errors, exegetical revision of key passages, minor stylistic improvements, or a complete overhaul?
- Would it be helpful to publish a dual version of the biblical text—for example, the old revered missionary version alongside a modern common-language version, with study notes and other helps all on the facing page?
- How much duplication should be allowed in the notes? Cross-references may work for experienced readers, but a less accomplished target group might prefer information located close to the biblical text to which it applies, even if it is repeated elsewhere.
- Should different interpretations, especially on “doctrinal issues,” be included in the notes, e.g., the relationship of Jesus’ “brothers” (Matt 12.49), Peter as the “rock” (Matt 16.18), Christ’s “body” and “blood” in the sacrament (Matt 26.26-27)? If nothing is said (to avoid controversy), readers may be disappointed, but including the major variant understandings will increase the note space needed.
- What are the most effective methods of testing for preference, correctness, acceptability, relevance? Different options (e.g., individual versus group oral questioning, written questionnaires, electronic surveys) should be tested to see what works best—and for whom. On testing for the “relevance” of study Bible notes, see the article by Harriet Hill in this same issue of *The Bible Translator*.

No research and testing should be carried out without first explaining to respondents why the test is being carried out and how much their honest answers will assist the SB project. People may also need to be educated regarding the options that they are being asked about, and the consequences of the alternative choices available. Questions must also be asked as concretely as possible. For example, people should not be asked if they prefer a more “literal” or a more

“meaningful” type of translation; rather, examples should be supplied that illustrate the difference in familiar Bible passages.

Finally, a SB project does not conclude with the publication of the complete Scriptures. This is surely a milestone for the Word in the vernacular, but the effort to improve the quality of communication must go on—the process of testing and revision never ends.

Conclusion: Where do we go from here?

In closing these personal reflections on study Bible production, I have a few more questions regarding possible implications of the preceding overview. Answers, or possible directions to take, will hopefully come from you, as you consider the specific needs of your own current and future situations.

- Would it be helpful to have a designated translation consultant to coordinate information and resources on SB production in a given region? This experienced person could also organize introductory and follow-up training workshops to assist projects that are just starting.
- What additional practical helps are needed for translation agencies, church groups, or other constituencies which are already producing or contemplating a SB project—over and above the UBS manual on SBs and the online Paratext notes and instructions available on the UBS intranet?
- What “mistaken notions” have you encountered in reading about SBs or working with a specific project? Can you correct, modify, or qualify my treatment of the ten assumptions discussed in this paper? What additional issues need to be considered, more or less urgently, to identify possible solutions? (Please communicate these to the TC in your region.)
- How could we assemble a collection of well-done model SB versions in non-Western languages—in every principal linguistic region of the UBS world? Would this require special funding and support for key target languages? If so, how might this be supplied?
- Would any sort of computer program be desirable, or even feasible, to facilitate the drafting of basic notes from one language to a related one, as SIL’s Adapt It program is currently being used for the text of the Bible?
- My discussion has focused on the production of a written SB. Is there any call for an audio, video, or electronic equivalent? If so, what direction should the development of this sort of study tool take?
- Is there a call for an OT and DC edition of “A Database for Study Notes” (NT) that was compiled by Ray Pritz (1995)? (This is available as an appendix of *Preparing a Study Edition of the Scriptures*.) If so, the author would appreciate feedback concerning the present database and any suggestions as to how it may be improved for a proposed OT and DC edition.
- Would it be helpful to have an inventory of edited back-translated notes from various recommended regional SBs accessible in a UBS online database? I have already had several requests for an English back-translation of the Chewa notes for certain NT books, but the lack of available translation staff has prevented their production.

The “mistaken notions” about SB production considered above are not the only ones that may need to be dispelled in your situation. But I hope that this article will help to correct a few misconceptions you may have had concerning this growing field of Scripture production, and perhaps prevent a few others from arising. More positively, the intention is that these personal reflections might encourage us all to think creatively about using this potentially most valuable tool for increasing the level of biblical literacy in our constituencies. Many have identified biblical illiteracy as one of the greatest threats to the expression of a relevant global Christianity in the twenty-first century.

On this final point, I think, we can all agree: *A text without a context may well be a pretext* (or an erroneous *prooftext*). To assume that we have successfully and satisfactorily communicated the Scriptures by simply providing a translated document for people in their own language is mistaken. Rather, it is necessary to supply a supplementary, conceptually relevant frame of reference, suitably contextualized within local sociocultural and religious contexts, to enable contemporary readers to correctly understand and interpret the biblical text in terms of its original setting and intended meaning. I do not wish to discount the essential operation of the Holy Spirit in the process of Scripture reproduction, transmission, comprehension, and personal application. Divine illuminating power is certainly sufficient to convert, edify, motivate, and inspire through the bare text of a Bible translation. I am merely saying that, given the opportunity, there is much more that must be done, using the tools and resources at our disposal, to make this communication event the most and the best that it can be. This may be done through the teaching ministry of the churches or by means of the various supplementary materials that study Bibles typically include (introductions, cross-references, explanatory notes, illustrations, and so forth), preferably both. In the poignant, yet provocative words of the Ethiopian court officer, “*How can I understand unless someone helps me?*” (Acts 8:31 CEV).

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