



Lighting the Lamp on the Pathway of Life

Bible Translating in the Languages of Southern Africa

by

Eric A Hermanson

Description

The Bible Society of South Africa celebrated its bicentenary in 2020.

This book was written to document the Bible translation projects which were done under the auspices of the Bible Society of South Africa between 1967, when Dr E A Nida held a seminar on his Dynamic Equivalent Theory for the translators who were then working on projects in South Africa and some

neighbouring countries, where the BSSA had regional offices, and 2020. It therefore covers the 10 Indigenous official languages of the Republic of South Africa under the section *Lamp to my Feet* and 7 Bantu, 1 Khoi and 4 San languages of Namibia and 1 Bantu language of Botswana. Some of these are also spoken across the border in neighbouring countries.

Languages – RSA Afrikaans, Southern Ndebele, Swati, Xhosa and Zulu; Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho (2 orthographies, RSA and Lesotho) and Tswana; Tsonga and Venda.

Namibia - Herero, Dhimba, Ndonga, Kwanyama, Kwangali, Mbukushu and Gciriku; Nama (Khoekhoegowab); Tsumkwe !Xū, Ekoka !Xū, Gobabis !Xū and ≠Akhoe.

Botswana – Kalanga.

Method – The author read all the archived files containing the minutes, correspondence and reports to and from the Society and the translation teams and drew on his own experience as translation consultant for many of the projects. To avoid the annoying “the Bible was translated by the Rev XYZ and his language informants...” he gives the names, not only of the translation team, but also of the review committee members, and their church affiliation. Without hiding anything in the files, he reveals to the reader the many trials and triumphs of the men and women from different countries, cultures, languages, churches and theological backgrounds, whom God called to work together in harmony so as to make the Word of God available to the people of Africa in their own heart language. Everything is carefully referenced in copious footnotes, to enable the reader to find where they may find further information.

Reader helps – include 120 photographs, a 6 page general and language bibliography under sub-headings and a 3 page index of photographs and a 10 page index.

Advance Review

This is truly a monumental piece of work ... As the author had personally been involved in various capacities in many of these translation projects, there is actually no one else with his background and insight into this history, as well as his ability to document this history in such a reliable and accurate manner. His academic training and background, his experience in the church and as Bible translator, as well as his extensive knowledge of the official languages of South Africa, qualified him as the ideal person to complete this project. (It) is absolutely necessary and really of great importance to bring to light the faithful way in which the Bible Society had been involved in fulfilling its calling and mission in the period following on the previous publication.

- H J Bernard Combrink, Professor Emeritus New Testament, University of Stellenbosch

About the Author

Eric A Hermanson did his undergraduate degree in African languages at the University of the Witwatersrand, where Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe was his Zulu lecturer. He then obtained the 4-year DipTh at the Baptist Theological College of SA. From 1965 to 1979 he assisted African Baptist congregations, speaking different languages in different parts of South Africa and Botswana. In 1979, became Manager of the Baptist Publishing House, training translators and checking their work for publication, while also serving as Editor of the SA Baptist magazine. In 1987, he joined the Bible Society of South Africa, becoming the Translations Consultant responsible also for all the text processing of the African language projects. During those years he received an MA (African languages) from UNISA and a DLitt from Stellenbosch University for a thesis on translating Hebrew metaphors into Zulu. He was responsible for introducing CATP and Paratext to the BSSA and served on the Editorial Board of The Bible Translator. He retired in 2005, but continued to serve the Bible Society from time to time in an honorary capacity.

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