A BETTER BIBLE TRANSLATION

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Category: Minority Language Translation

After yesterday's post about one of the fringes of the Bible Translation world, it was good to come across an article today that was very much on the right lines. Ethiopianchurch blog interviewed Dr. Loren Bliese who is retiring after working in Ehtiopia with United Bible Societies for 44 years. Here are a few extracts from the interview:

> *EthC: Thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview for Ethiopianchurch Blog. Why is Bible translation important at all? Why is the Bible so important that it deserves a new hearing in either new languages or in fresh translation into older languages?*
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> ***LB: The Bible is Godâ€™s word which shows what he has done in creating us and saving us from sin through Christ. It is the true guide for faith and life in this world, and leading to eternity with God in heaven. The Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek and some Aramaic. It is important that the message be understood, so that it can work in the human mind with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This requires translation into current languages, and revisionsor new translations as those languages change over the years.***
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> *EthC: What are the special challenges of translating the bible into Amharic/English/whatever? Are there particularly Ethiopian realities that one needs to be aware of? And how did you overcome them?*
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> ***LB: There are linguistic and cultural differences in every language, which are special challenges. The goal of a translation is to convey the message so that it will be understood clearly and powerfully, as the original audience understood it. This requires making things that were understood by the original audience clear to an audience unfamiliar with the Biblical setting, such as geography, history and culture. For example modern Western culture does not relate to nomadic shepherding as described with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Many Ethiopian ethnic groups have no experience with ships and oceans. Care must be taken to make the unknown clear. In order to do this, single words in the source languages become whole phrases, or are explained in footnotes and a glossary...***
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> *EthC: What are some of the challenges translators encounter?*
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> ***LB: One major challenge is to make sure the translation is not ambiguous. If it can mean something other than the correct message, the chances are it will be misunderstood by at least some of the readers, even when the translators know what it should mean. Testing is done before publication to find such places with double meaning, and revise them.***
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> *EthC: Is translating into Amharic/Afaan Oromo/Tigrinya any different from say translating into English?*

> ***LB: Culturally it is easier to translate into Ethiopian languages than into English. Semantic categories are often closer. Linguistically the sentence structure of Hebrew and Greek are closer to English than to Ethiopian languages with the verb at the end of the sentence.***

This is good stuff. Read the whole interview here.Â If you are interested, you can read some of my own reflections on a trip t Ethiopia here.