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ABSTRACT
This paper reviews the recent establishment of a joint interconfessional project to provide explanatory notes to accompany a contemporary translation of the Bible into Chichewa (Malawi/Zambia). After a summary of the chief characteristics and purpose of such a ‘study Bible’, the various kinds of notes that may be included are presented: exegetical, situational, thematic, structural, stylistic, functional, contextual, translational, intertextual, and textual. The focus is upon the ‘cultural’, and ‘translational’ varieties since these normally occasion the greatest demand for ‘contextualisation’. Two broad categories of cultural note are combined in the discussion, those pertaining to significant aspects of the traditional Chewa belief system (‘world-view’) and those that concern their customary behavioral norms (‘way-of-life’). The need for such expository notes will be considered in terms of the theoretical distinction between ‘high-‘ and ‘low-context’ societies and then exemplified practically with respect to Luke’s Gospel. The paper concludes with an overview of several major difficulties that are anticipated in the production of a study Bible of this nature.

1 A STUDY BIBLE IN CHICHEWA
In recent years most Christians who are speakers of the major world languages, the Western ones at any rate, have been exposed to the concept of a ‘study Bible’, that is, a standard translation which is accompanied by an extensive system of supplementary aids. Included among such helps one can usually find various types of explanatory and thematic notes, maps, data charts, graphs, diagrams, Scriptural cross references, a glossary or dictionary of key terms, various topical indices, illustrations, sectional headings, and often a small concordance of selected words. Study (or ‘learning’—as the CEV puts it) editions of this nature have created a huge, highly competitive new market for what is still by far the most popular book ever sold, so much so that publishers have found it necessary to target their readership more precisely. Thus we have English study Bibles designated specifically for children, for students, for women, for new readers, for the elderly, and of course for different Christian constituencies, which are often reflected in the particular version that is used as a ‘base text’, e.g., NKJV—NASB—NIV—GNB—NRSV—NEB (moving roughly along a scale from more to less theologically ‘conservative’ Protestantism).
The situation is not nearly so favorable, however, for Christians who speak a majority of the world's tongues, certainly not on the continent of Africa, even in the case of the most widely spoken sub-Saharan languages, such as Swahili, Hausa, Igbo, Fulani, Lingala, Zulu, Xhosa, Shona, or Chichewa. Here one is considered blessed merely to possess a complete Bible in one’s mother tongue, no matter if this happens to be a rigidly literal, at times unintelligible rendering, completed nearly a century ago by foreign missionaries who did not command its full linguistic resources or appreciate its subtle literary nuances. In recent years the United Bible Societies (UBS) have put forth a concerted effort to organize projects intended to produce a much more meaning-oriented and linguistically natural ‘common language’ translation in every ‘national’ language and/or one that has a million or more speakers. Thus the ten million (+) speakers of Chichewa (spoken in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and beyond) are eagerly awaiting the appearance of the Buku Loyera (‘Holy Book’) to supplement much older Protestant and Catholic versions.

In keeping with their general focus on meaningfulness and an effort to provide more assistance to Bible readers, these newer translations tend to include footnotes, which the older versions usually did not. This was in response to a long-standing Bible Society directive (now rescinded) that its Scripture publications must be produced text-only, ‘without note or comment’. It is generally true to say, however, that such footnotes tend to be deficient in terms of both quantity and quality, that is, with respect to how well they actually cater for the expressed desires and observed requirements of their intended reader-group. For this reason it is imperative that carefully researched and composed study editions be prepared to satisfy the great needs of the African continent. Accordingly, the UBS has targeted several major languages in which to carry out pilot projects in order to both evaluate the response of the local market and also serve as a model for others. The Swahili New Testament study version is in fact nearing completion, and a well received trial portion of Luke and Acts was recently published. The Chichewa project is next in the African line following a

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1 In a recent (1998) report to the UBS Subcommittee on Translation, the Africa Regional Translation Coordinator, Dr Philip Noss, notes that there are currently 306 publishing projects in 182 languages in 36 countries (of Africa). The total number of Bible projects is 130. An interesting historical comparison is the fact that from the first translation known as LXX (Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) up to the end of 1996 the Bible had been translated into 133 African languages (taken from the minutes of this meeting). The latter figure includes both first and more modern translations into any given language.

2 For a historical overview, explanatory description, and comparative survey of this new Chichewa translation, see Wendland 1998. The Buku Loyera in both its editions, Catholic and Protestant (minus the Deuterocanonical books), is due to be officially launched in Lilongwe, Malawi sometime in April of 1999.

3 It is interesting to observe that most of the earlier annotated Bibles in Africa were produced by the Catholic Church, for example, the Malembo Oyera (‘Holy Letters’) version in Chichewa (1966).

4 Luka na Matendo ya Mitume 1997, Dodoma: Bible Society of Tanzania (pp 123).
preliminary organisational meeting that was held in November (1998) in Lilongwe, Malawi. Plans are to begin with the gospel of Luke, once an editorial and various review committees have been established and trained, so that a publication date in the year 2000 can be achieved.

While this Chichewa version will obviously have many features in common with study Bibles produced elsewhere in the world, the purpose of this paper is to suggest and explore some of the ways in which it will differ from those available in English, for example, with particular reference to the very different linguistic, literary, educational, religious, and cultural setting that characterises its potential readership. Therefore, after more fully surveying the general nature and goals of a study Bible (2), including the diverse types of explanatory-descriptive comments to be incorporated (3), I will focus my attention upon the need for notes that involve the greatest degree of contextualisation, namely, those pertaining to language and culture. The process of annotation itself is discussed with special attention to the notion of ‘implicit/explicit information’ as this relates to so-called ‘high-context’ and ‘low-context’ societies (4). Difficulties that arise with respect to Chewa sociocultural and traditional religious concerns will be illustrated in particular detail (5). I will conclude (6) with a preview of what lies ahead for this important study Bible project in terms of some of the major problems that we anticipate encountering, especially in the area of contextualising the text. Here I will also outline the significant communicative potential that we hope will be realised by this pioneering effort (with respect to the south-central region of Africa) as part of its overall goals and objectives.

2 SOME PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES OF STUDY BIBLE PRODUCTION

The following summary outlines a number of important principles and recommended procedures that guide the production of UBS study Bibles throughout the world and the Chichewa project in particular. The diverse nature of the footnotes, which is of special concern here, will be dealt with separately in section 3 below. Other crucial factors that need to be considered are those that concern the purpose and scope of such a joint scholarly but community based undertaking, its intended readership and audience, the production team and their associates, the translation base, the use of introductions and provision of a thematic index, matters of format, and certain other guidelines that pertain to general compositional and stylistic features.

5 These guidelines may of course be modified in response to local exigencies and expressed desires. They are based on various discussions that I have participated in as a member of the Study Bible Text Committee of the UBS African Regional Translation Consultation (Dr P Renju, Convenor) with particular reference also to three important resource documents: 'Suggestions for principles and procedures for the preparation of a Swahili study Bible' (by Dr E A Nida, n.d); 'Study Bible guidelines: Final report—UBS Triennial Translation Workshop' (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, May 8–21, 1991); 'United Bible Societies guidelines for study Bibles' (UBS, New York, May 1992).
2.1 Purpose-Scope

A 'study Bible', from a UBS perspective, is a standard, widely accepted translation that in addition to the normal types of 'readers helps' (e.g., maps, illustrations, cross references, sectional headings) is supplemented by a much more elaborate set of explicatory and elucidative notes. These comments are specifically formulated to enable a particular readership (see 2.2) to more fully understand, perceive the relevance of, and practically apply the biblical text in its smaller and larger portions (e.g., a book or pericope and its parts). They are not intended to be a full commentary, but aim rather to stimulate, encourage, and complement the receptors' own, perhaps latent abilities with regard to biblical interpretation. This objective includes the description or clarification of certain pertinent aspects of the historical, ecological, and sociocultural context in which the Scriptures originated as well as its relationship to important correspondences and contrasts to be found in the contemporary setting of the receptor community. In some cases, notes are prepared with the negative purpose of preventing an erroneous interpretation of an important biblical concept or passage.

Study Bible notes are explicitly intended to be 'non-doctrinal' and 'non-sectarian' in nature. That is, they exclude the expression of judgments concerning contentious theological, denominational, and hermeneutical issues, whether actual or potential in a given setting. In addition, these notes should not include any prescriptions or prohibitions that pertain to particular contemporary applications of the Scriptures. The opinions set forth must reflect, insofar as this is possible, the widest consensus that is determinable among reputable biblical scholars on the one hand and the local Christian community on the other. In the relatively rare instances where a potentially divisive matter of interpretation must be addressed in a note, every attempt will be made to concisely represent the various major positions of relevance in the most neutral manner of expression that is available in the receptor language (RL).

2.2 Readership-Audience

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to prepare a study Bible for 'average' readers, for how does one go about defining such a nondescript constituency? Furthermore, in most situations in Africa it will be possible to produce only one such annotated version per language community, at least for the foreseeable future. Therefore, it is imperative that adequate prior market research and receptor opinion sampling be carried out by the national Bible Society and/or publishing organisation that is responsible for a given project. It should also be recognized that the potential readership of such a widely spoken language as Chichewa is quite disparate, consisting of different age groups, ecclesiastical communities, linguistic dialects (including second-language speakers), urban versus rural dwellers, educational levels, and so forth. Clearly it is not possible to answer all the questions that readers from such diverse sociological categories might bring to the text or derive from it. Similarly, a text com-
mittee cannot hope to satisfy all of their felt needs or desires due to such limiting factors as space restrictions, standard exegetical principles, Bible society policies, or simply our deficiency of biblical background knowledge. On the other hand, it will often be necessary to provide certain information for which readers feel no explicit or implicit need because this will presumably enhance their comprehension of the original text. Thus important restrictions and choices have to be made every step of the way, and the more precisely that the proposed readership can be defined and their opinions determined, the easier it will be for appropriate and contextualised notes to be prepared for them.

As far as the Chichewa study Bible project is concerned, the primary target user group has been rather specifically delineated as follows:

- Congregational lay-leaders and elders (persons with no formal theological training) who are often called upon to preach and teach in the absence of a called pastor or priest;
- Rural ministers or catechists having little or no access to biblical resources (commentaries, Bible dictionary) to use when preparing sermons, Bible studies, and other pastoral materials;
- Monolingual speakers of Chichewa (in the first two categories) or those who are not skilled enough in English to be able to make effective use of study aids even if they were available in that language.

In addition, a suitably composed study edition will also be of great assistance to those pastors who may be well-trained and fluent in English but who minister to their people for the most part in Chichewa. It is not always so easy for people, no matter how well educated, to readily and/or accurately convert specialised terms and key concepts from one language and field of experience (i.e., the Bible and religion) to another. Thus a reliable translation that is also annotated in the vernacular will take them at least part of the way along this formidable transformational exercise.

At this juncture it may be necessary to point out that while it is assumed that most consumers of a study Bible will be readers of the text, in an African setting this will not always be the case. The great majority of receptors for one reason or another (e.g., non-literacy, lack of funds to buy a Bible, non-availability of the Scriptures) hear the Word rather than read it for themselves, and to a lesser extent this will be true also for an annotated version in their mother tongue. Thus it may be expected that a significant number of lay preachers and presiding elders of local congregations, especially those in so-called 'independent' African churches, will not be able to read at all or be functionally literate to the degree that they can easily 'process' and apply a literary feature such as footnotes. In view of this need, therefore, it will be important to compose explanatory and descriptive comments that are not only readily readable (i.e., easily articulated) but also immediately 'hearable' as well, that is, text which is understood without undue difficulty as it is being aurally perceived.
2.3 Production participants

There are three main levels of participant interaction involved in the production of a comprehensive, audience-oriented, inter-church study Bible: the publisher, the editorial team, and one or more review committees. The primary publisher is normally a national member-group of the UBS world fellowship, such as the Bible Society of Malawi in the case of the Chichewa project. It is the responsibility of the publisher through its General Secretary and governing Board of Directors to attend to different aspects of the overall administration, such as initiating the programme, providing for its financing (with local as well as foreign funds) and other needs (office and equipment), establishing efficient working procedures, monitoring and reporting team progress, approving the text’s publication, and ensuring effective promotion and distribution of the final product. Where possible a local ‘administrative committee’ consisting of the leaders and specialists (e.g., publishers, language experts) of supporting churches can be established to help deal with such important matters as fund-raising, any staff disciplinary problems that might arise, popularising the project, and testing all pre-final draft materials for general acceptability among their various constituencies.

The production team is selected and appointed by the national Bible society in consultation with the leadership of local supporting church bodies, Protestant as well as Catholic. It consists of a general editor who coordinates the team’s activities and acts as a liaison between it and the governing administration on the one hand and various text reviewers on the other. S/he works in close association with at least one full-time and/or several part-time authors. They must all be competent, experienced, and dedicated national scholars in relation to the languages of Scripture (if possible) and also with respect to the key biblical disciplines, exegesis in particular. Equally, if not more, important is the requirement that they be effective communicators in the receptor language (presumably their mother tongue) and cognisant of the basic principles of meaning-oriented Bible translation. The editorial team is supervised by a UBS translation consultant who provides technical guidance, ensures the necessary level of quality control, and ultimately recommends the work for publication. The team must also be complemented by a competent computer keyboarder who has the crucial task not only of typing the notes accurately but also of inserting them (or their references) correctly where they belong in the text.

Review committees along with individual reviewers perform an essential role in the overall programme, particularly in the task of adequately contextualising the biblical notes from a local, potential users’ perspective. The emphasis here in terms of their composition is diversity. Thus representative reviewers must be sought from all areas of the Christian community: its principal dialects, sociolinguistic classes, denominational affiliation (again it is important to stress—both Catholic and Protestant), as well as members of the designated target group (e.g., lay preachers, rural pastors). It is the vital task of reviewers to react honestly and critically to the various drafts that they are sent (whether whole books or portions) with regard to matters like relevance, style,
readability, clarity, helpfulness, et cetera—or the corresponding negative qualities. Additional experts may also be engaged if needed on a part time basis to perform specialised reviewing tasks related to such factors as the original languages, audience testing, publication format, and specific biblical fields like history, geography, flora and fauna, customs and cultures.

2.4 Translation base text

A UBS study Bible is preferably based on a modern, ‘common-language’ (Wonderly 1968:ch 5), meaning-focused translation in the RL. In contrast to a relatively literal, formal correspondence version, a more idiomatic, discourse organised rendering, such as the Buku Loyera [BY] in Chichewa, makes possible the expression of a greater amount of semantic content (connotation as well as denotation) and also pragmatic intent (i.e., pertaining to communication functions) within the text itself, thereby reducing the number of explanations required in footnotes. It is often helpful however to make reference to a literal translation in the notes in order to point out important stylistic and structural features found in the original Greek (or Hebrew) text or to comment on certain popular, but often misunderstood, instances of ‘church language’ in the vernacular.6

2.5 Introductions and index

Special sectional and individual book introductions are a standard feature of most UBS sponsored Bibles nowadays. These longer expositions provide relevant (and widely supported, but not controversial) information that pertains to the historical, cultural, geographical, and literary backgrounds as well as the key thematic elements found in the respective books and related groups of books (e.g., Pentateuch, Major and Minor Prophets, Synoptic Gospels, Pauline Epistles). This elucidative material does not need to be repeated then in specific passage-related footnotes. The Bible as a whole may be preceded by an introduction that explains in a straightforward, non-prescriptive manner certain salient facts about its larger organisation, compositional (canonical) history, topical inventory, religious value, the history of its translation into the RL, and practical tips as to its application, especially with regard to using the various ‘study’ aids such as footnotes.

An expanded subject index is particularly valuable in the case of a study Bible where references to the many notes, in addition to the text itself, should make possible

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6 In the case of the Chichewa study Bible, it will not be necessary to provide the editor’s own literal rendering of the biblical text because two such translations already exist in the language and are widely used, namely, an older, more formal Protestant version (Buku Lopatulika [BL] ‘Sacred Book’) and a somewhat more readable Catholic version (Malembo Oyera [MO] ‘Holy Letters’). These versions tend to be the source of much of the ‘church language’ (Chibaibulo) that is used within the Christian community.
a much larger inventory of entries (persons, places, events, topics, issues, etc). This would now include notes that are appropriately contextualised with regard to the receptor language (Chichewa) as well as its cultural framework and (traditional) religious perspective.

2.6 Notational format

In order to make the notes supplied for a study Bible as 'user-friendly' as possible, it is essential that there always be a clear, readily perceptible linkage between a given note and the passage or text portion to which it refers (to be evaluated and confirmed by target group testing). In addition, the pertinent connections to any other type of supplementary aid often need to be explicitly pointed out, especially with respect to important graphic features, such as illustrations, diagrams, charts, and maps. A dual system of reference is helpful to avoid confusion, especially for inexperienced readers. That is to say, the focal verbal elements to be discussed in a particular note are immediately followed by a raised letter which is repeated at the beginning of the comment at the bottom of the page where a chapter-verse reference to the corresponding text is also given.

Each note should be prepared as a distinct unit consisting of a separate line or paragraph at the bottom of the page. Long, 'scholarly', multi-paragraph notes must be avoided, as should repeated references to certain key terms, which may be more readily defined in a glossary (e.g., 'sinners' in Luke or 'the Jews' in John). Such efficiency will make it more possible to achieve the ideal of having the text of a given note appear on the same page as the passage to which it refers. The notes should be set up in a single, wide column format for better readability even if the text is printed in the standard two columns per page. The amount of footnotes should normally not take up more than an average of a third of the printed page so that they do not over-

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7 If an entire section of the biblical text is being commented on, the reference letter should be placed at the end of the section title, while at the bottom of the page the chapter-verse reference is correspondingly made to the whole unit. Letters instead of numbers are preferred for all footnotes in order to prevent any possible confusion with verse numbers. Either the local orthography or the English alphabet may be used since the symbols are simply functioning as signs of identification. These letters are to run sequentially throughout a single chapter; they may then be doubled if additional references are required.

8 Words and phrases that are explained in the glossary at the end of a study Bible should be clearly signaled in the translation text (e.g., by a raised asterisk) so that the reader knows where to refer to them.

9 An alternative page format that needs to be tested for legibility in a Malawian setting has recently appeared in the Good News Study Bible (GNSB; New York: United Bible Societies, 1997). This features a single, somewhat wider column of justified text for the translation, with the notes being arranged in a narrower, unjustified column along the right margin of the page, i.e., 'sidenotes'—for easier reference. This also permits the vertical sequence of notes to be referenced simply to verse numbers rather than by means of raised letters at the end of key words or phrases.
whelm the reader or invite pure disregard. However, they must not be printed in so small a type (in order to squeeze more information on a single page) that they cannot be easily read by a majority of the target constituency.

2.7 Compositional-stylistic features

Our concern for a proper 'contextualisation' of study Bible notes also affects the way in which selected lexical items are discussed. That is to say, the comments with regard to particular terms must not be holistic (paradigmatic) in nature, but should normally be composed with specific reference to the syntagmatic biblical context in which they occur, e.g., with respect to the common ethical meaning of 'righteousness' (dukaiousun) in Matthew as distinct from Pauline forensic usage. Similarly, the historical position of a given book within the canon must also be taken into consideration, especially when dealing with important OT concepts, so that a NT perspective is not imposed upon the interpretation (although a particular apostolic application as well as a RL comparison may certainly be referred to as part of the exposition). In addition, the overall compositional process should be guided by the alternative use of ‘visual aids’ such as illustrations, mini-maps, graphs, diagrams, and tables. These devices may be utilised whenever it is possible to depict or display certain information more economically than to describe or explain it verbally. However, such visuals cannot be too complicated or sophisticated in nature lest a majority of the intended readership fail to perceive and interpret them easily and/or correctly.

Study notes are not meant to provide either an outlet for demonstrating the editors' scholarly erudition (e.g., with all sorts of references to the ancient versions or even the Hebrew/Greek text) or a 'pulpit' for them to 'preach' from (e.g., by means of biased homiletical or devotional comments). Furthermore, the notes are not intended to act as a substitute for the biblical text (translation). Instead, they are composed in order to lead the reader (along with any listeners) more completely and confidently into the message of Scripture by providing necessary clarification, explanation, description, and direction in terms of pointing out pertinent connections with the receptor language and culture. These comments should not waste space by simply repeating or paraphrasing the base translation. They also need to be contextualised linguistically in the sense that the general level of language used must not be any more complex or technical than that employed in the translation itself. In some cases it may have to be even simpler in syntax and vocabulary when referring to concepts and expressions

10 It is usually the case that the earlier pages of a given book require greater than the average number and size of footnotes due to the additional background information that is necessary in order to lay the foundation for the rest of the text. Later pages will tend to be correspondingly less densely annotated.

11 This is an important factor to consider in Africa where eyesight is generally poor (due to disease and the lack of proper medical treatment) while eye glasses are correspondingly expensive.
that are relatively difficult in the biblical text. In short, what we are seeking in the Chichewa study Bible are notes that are concise, accurate, clear, stylistically appealing, contextually relevant, and whenever possible, also provocative in that they evoke in receptors the desire to ‘search the Scriptures’ (Jn 5:39; Ac 17:11; 1 Pt 1:10–11) in order to learn more about God, his plan of salvation, and how his people ought to think and behave in response.

3 TEN TYPES OF NOTES FOR STUDY BIBLES

The ten varieties of footnotes listed below are briefly defined and illustrated by means of examples taken from the NIV Study Bible (except where noted) with reference to Luke 1–3. There are of course many instances of ‘mixed’, overlapping, or combined types of notes. My selection is given merely as a sample to suggest the diversity of background information that may be necessary to enable local readers (and listeners) to correctly understand the biblical text as they encounter it via translation in their own language and situational setting. Such notes are thus supplied to provide average receptors with a conceptual ‘context’ or framework that will enable them to more readily and accurately interpret and meaningfully apply the text of Scripture that they happen to be accessing at a given moment. In a sense these descriptive-explanatory comments are simply an extension of the important translational principle of ‘functional equivalence’, which includes a provision whereby certain implicit information necessary for understanding the biblical message is made explicit so that there exists at least the possibility of accurate communication (de Waard & Nida 1986:36–40). From a somewhat different theoretical perspective, we are referring to a procedure whereby receptors (readers or hearers) are provided with a ‘cognitive environment’ through extratextual means that will allow the intended message to be conveyed with a greater likelihood of achieving ‘adequate contextual effects at minimal processing cost’.

3.1 Exegetical

Exegetical notes are intended to clarify the presumed referential (co-textual) or implicational meaning of the source language (SL) text, especially where difficult concepts, technical terms, religious expressions, proper names, and so on are concerned, for example, 1:2 handed down—‘a technical term for passing on information as authoritative tradition’; 1:6 upright...blamelessly—‘they were not sinless, but were faithful and sincere in keeping God’s ordinances...’; 1:19 Gabriel—‘the name can mean “God is my hero” or “mighty man of God”...’; 2:7 manger—‘the feeding trough of the animals...’; 2:33 child’s father—Luke, aware of the virgin birth of Jesus (1:26–35), is referring to Joseph as Jesus’ legal father; 2:46 the teachers—‘the rabbis, experts in Judaism’. Alternative interpretations of the biblical text should be limited to

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12 This is in keeping with the ‘principle of relevance’ (Gutt 1991:25–30).
those that are significant in meaning or of special relevance in the receptor hermeneutical setting and which have a relatively high probability of being valid, for example, 2:37 '...then [she] was a widow until she was eighty-four'—footnote: Or 

widow for eighty-four years.

3.2 Situational

These notes supply necessary background information that pertains to the SL setting which surrounds, situates, or underlies the message with regard to such matters as history, politics, religion, culture/customs, geography, flora/fauna, economy, and others, for example, 1:5 Herod king of Judah—'Herod the Great reigned 37-4 BC, and his kingdom included Samaria, Galilee, much of Perea and Cœle-Syria. The time referred to here is probably c. 7-6'; priestly division of Abijah—'From the time of David the priests were organized into 24 divisions, and Abijah was one of the "heads of the priestly families" (Ne 12:12; see 1 Ch 24:10); 2:46 three days—'One day traveling away from Jerusalem, a second traveling back and a third looking for him'. Certain significant events or teachings can easily be overlooked if such notes do not call special attention to them, for example, with reference to Zechariah's act of burning incense in the temple (1:9): '...Ordinarily a priest would have this privilege very infrequently, and sometimes never, since duty assignments were determined by lot'. Another comment of this nature would be needed at 2:24 to call attention to Joseph and Mary's relative poverty, for example, 'The doves or pigeons were offered by people who could not afford to offer a lamb' (GNSB).

3.3 Thematic

Thematic comments point out major themes, topics, recurrent motifs, et cetera within a given book, section, or pericope, including reiterated theological concepts ('intratextuality'), for example, 1:13 Do not be afraid—'this word of reassurance is given many times in both OT and NT (see, e.g., v. 30; 2:10; 5:10; 8:50; 12:7,32...'; 1:14 joy—'a keynote of these opening chapters (vv. 14,44,47,58; 2:10); 2:20 praising God—'a term often used by Luke (1:64, 2:13); 3:6 all mankind—'God's salvation was to be made know to both Jews and Gentiles—a major theme of Luke's gospel (see note on 2:31); 3:21 as he was praying—'Only Luke notes Jesus' praying at the time of his baptism. Jesus in prayer is one of the special themes of Luke (see 5:16; 6:12; 9:18,28–29; 11:1; 22:32,41,46').

13 It must be stressed that notes such as this which refer readers to other passages in the Bible that may be parallel in form or content should be carefully checked to ensure that the verses cited clearly apply to the point under consideration. Average readers quickly get discouraged with and may soon give up on a system that includes too many gratuitous references—those having only a minimal perceptible connection with the passage at hand.
3.4 Structural

Structural notes seek to clarify the textual organization of a particular verse, section, pericope, or larger portion of a given book, including any significant patterns of repetition (e.g., parallelism, chiasmus), the overall development of the discourse (e.g., narrative-plot, letter-argument), and literary genres that are evident in the text, for example, 1:1-4 'Using language similar to classical Greek, Luke begins with a formal preface, common to historical works of that time, in which he states his purpose for writing and identifies the recipient...'; 1:46-55 'One of the four hymns preserved in Lk 1-2 (see vv.68-79; 2:14; 2:29-32)...This song is like a psalm, and should also be compared with the song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:1-10)'; 1:68-79 '...Whereas the Magnificat...is similar to a psalm, the Benedictus is more like a prophecy'; 3:20 locked John up in prison—'...This did not occur until sometime after the beginning of Jesus' ministry (see Jn 3:22-24), but Luke mentions it here in order to conclude his section on John's ministry before beginning his account of Jesus' ministry...'; 3:23-38 'There are several differences between Luke's genealogy and Matthew's (1:2-16) [besides their general placement within the respective gospels]. Matthew begins with Abraham (the father of the Jewish people) while Luke traces the line in the reverse order and goes back to Adam, showing Jesus' relationship to the whole human race...'. Notes of this kind must not become too conceptually dense or complex, however, especially where non-focal information is involved, for example, 'Some scholars suggest that...A more likely explanation, however, is that...'.

3.5 Stylistic

These notes serve to reveal the meaning and/or significance of certain important biblical (SL) literary features and rhetorical devices that may or may not be reproduced in the Chewa translation, such as figures of speech (metaphor, metonymy) irony, hyperbole, punning (plays on words/names), rhetorical questions, and others, for example, 1:51 his arm—a figurative description of God's powerful acts. God does not have a body; he is spirit (Jn 4:24); 1:69 horn—'indicates strength, as in the horn of an animal (Dt 33:17...'); 1:78 the rising sun—a reference to the coming Messiah...'; 1:79 those living in darkness—the lost, separated from God (Isa 9:1-2; Mt 4:16); 2:25 the consolation of Israel—the comfort the Messiah would bring to people at his coming...'; 2:35 a sword will pierce your own soul too—The word "too" indicates that Mary, as well as Jesus, would suffer deep anguish—the first reference in this Gospel to Christ's suffering and death' (also 'thematic', 3.3).

3.6 Functional

Functionally oriented notes indicate the author's presumed purpose or primary aim in using certain expressions, either in a particular verse or within the discourse of a complete textual unit, for example, 1:3 carefully investigated—'Luke's account was exact
in historical detail, having been checked in every way...'; 2:31 all people—'as a Gentile himself, Luke was careful to emphasize the truth that salvation was offered for the Gentiles (v.32) as well as for Jews'; 2:49 in my Father's house—Jesus pointed to his personal duty to his Father in heaven. He contrasted his 'my Father' with Mary's "your father" (v. 48)...'; 3:23–38 '...Although tracing a genealogy through the mother's side was unusual, so was the virgin birth. Luke's explanation here that Jesus was the son of Joseph, "so it was thought" (v. 23)...suggests the importance of Mary in Jesus' genealogy'; 3:23 about thirty years old—'Luke, a historian, relates the beginning of Jesus' ministry both to world history (see vv.1–2) and to the rest of Jesus' life...'. Such functional, or directional, comments would include reference to any noteworthy conative features (i.e., what he wanted his words to do as well as to say) and emotive elements, for example, 1:34 How will this be...?—'Mary did not ask in disbelief, as Zechariah did (v. 20). See v. 45'; 1:54 remembering to be merciful—'The song ends with an assurance that God will be true to his promises to his people...'; 2:10 Do not be afraid—'Fear was the common reaction to angelic appearances... and encouragement was needed'.

3.7 Contextual

Contextual comments point out any special correspondences or conflicts with the receptor language (RL) setting that apply with regard to something that is mentioned in the SL text (complementing #2, 'situational' above), for example, 1:80 lived in the desert—'John's parents, old at his birth, probably died while he was young, and he apparently grew up in the Desert of Judea... The notion of 'desert' (a dry and barren wasteland) needs to be clarified since the closest equivalent term in Chichewa is not really accurate—mapululu (BL), chipululu (BY). The fact of John's living in such a deserted place is more related to his prophetic 'calling' than his lack of relatives to provide him with a home and take care of him. It may be noted that in a Bantu context, individuals who act strangely (in a contra-cultural manner) and live off by themselves are often suspected or even accused of being 'witches' (mfiti). In 1:25 on the other hand we find a note that draws attention to a basic similarity in cultural perspective: The Lord... has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace—'Not only did lack of children deprive the parents of personal happiness, but it was generally considered to indicate divine disfavor and often brought social reproach...' (in a Chewa setting the practice of sorcery might also be surmised). Many culturally related comments will be necessary in order to prevent a wrong 'reading' of the biblical text as a result of differing beliefs, values, attitudes, and presuppositions, for example, with reference to mention that the Holy Spirit was upon him in 2:25 (note that a filling/empowering of the HS is an important motif in Luke, cf 1:35,41,67; 3:16,22). Thus it must be pointed out that such a charismatic event has nothing at all to do with the traditional belief in ancestral spirit possession (which normally affects women in any case).
3.8 Translational

Translational remarks call attention to terms, concepts, and expressions that cause special difficulty when one tries to render them in Chichewa—or when some familiar or especially misleading usage from the older versions (MO/BL) has been changed or modified in the BY. An example of the former is found in 3:16—'He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire', where it may be necessary to explain the figurative notion of 'baptism' here (which for various reasons must be rendered in transliterated form) as well as the relationship between the 'Holy Spirit' and 'fire' (of judgment, purification, charismatic enablement?). A good example of where a significant change in a traditional key term has been deemed necessary is seen with reference to 'grace' in 2:40 where cisomo ('good fortune', BL) and caulere ('free gift', MO) have been rendered as ankamudalitsa ('he kept on blessing him') in BY. Another translational problem that is also of exegetical concern (3.1) occurs with the title 'Christ' in 2:11. Most readers (and hearers!) interpret the literal Kristu/Khrisì (BL/MO) as a proper name referring to 'Jesus Christ', not as a Messianic designation, for example, Mpulumutsi wolonezedwa uja 'that promised Savior' (BY). Many more instances of this type of difficulty, along with the 'contextual' variety, are found in section 4.

3.9 Intertextual

These notes make mention of any important reference/allusion to or citation of the Old Testament in the passage at hand. They may also comment on the original usage, especially where there seems to be some significant semantic similarity or deviation, for example, 2:36 Anna—'Same name as OT Hannah (1 Sa 1:2), which means “gracious.” Anna praised God for the child Jesus as Hannah had praised God for the child Samuel (1 Sa 2:1-10)'; 2:52—'Luke appears to have borrowed the words of 1 Sa 2:26'; 3:2 word of God [came to]—'...God's message came to John as it came to the OT prophets (cf. Jer 1:2; Eze 1:3; Hos 1:1; Joel 1:1)'. Major differences from the other gospel accounts (in the case of Luke) should also be indicated, for example, 3:21 as he was praying—'only Luke records Jesus' praying at the time of his baptism. Jesus in prayer is one of the special themes of Luke...'; 2:39 they returned to Galilee—'Luke does not mention the coming of the Magi, the danger from Herod, or the flight to and return from Egypt (cf. Mt 2:1-23)'. But here again certain major intertextual correspondences may also be worth pointing out, for example, so that you may know—'cf. John's purpose for writing (Jn 20:31)'.

3.10 Textual

Textual comments discuss any major variants in the original Greek (or Hebrew) manuscripts. There are none present in Lk 1–3, but consider 2:14 as a hypothetical example, i.e., εὐδοκία or εὐδοκιας, that is, '...on earth peace, good will toward men' (KJV) or '...on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased' (RSV)—there is little
opposition to the latter. Such text-critical notes will generally be avoided in the Chichewa study Bible, except where absolutely necessary. Also to be strictly limited (simply to conserve space) are ‘applicational’ comments of a pastoral or devotional nature, for example, the NIV at 2:14—‘...Peace with God is received by faith in Christ...’ Alternative readings of the biblical text, especially the Hebrew or where the Septuagint (LXX) is involved, may be pointed out if the differences are meaningful or represent different ecclesiastical traditions. But it does no good to offer such confusing comments as ‘Some manuscripts have...while others have...’—or ‘Hebrew obscure’ (it may well be that scholars themselves are simply obtuse with respect to the original text).

4 TEXT AND CONTEXT—SOCIETY AND SETTING

No text (any meaningful combination of signs)—oral or written, verbal or non-verbal—ever occurs in isolation. It is always ‘contextualised’ (modified in form, content, and function) to a greater or lesser extent by means of other texts, that is, ‘intertextually’, and also ‘situationally’ by the particular sociocultural context and communication setting, or occasion, within which it takes place. These are important circumstantial factors that greatly complicate the process of message transmission and influence the relative degree of success (or failure) of any given communication event (S == [M] ⊃ R). Therefore, such features must all be carefully analysed and assessed when planning a project that aims to achieve a greater measure of communicability with respect to a specific set of goals and objectives, for example, in terms of Scripture intelligibility and use within a certain world setting, for example, that of the Chichewa speaking peoples of south central Africa.

The great difficulty that one faces when trying to communicate by means of a written message alone concerns the relative amount of essential information that may be left unexpressed, that is, presupposed or ‘implicit’, without serious loss to the intended message.

This “unwritten part” includes the things an author presumes the audience knows about how the world works, which he or she can leave between the lines of a text, so to speak, yet which are crucial to its understanding (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:9).

Not only 'how the world works' must be taken into consideration, but more important perhaps is how a particular society ‘thinks’, that is, its so-called 'world-view' (beliefs, assumptions, values, felt needs, etc). On the one hand, an author cannot state overtly, or ‘explicitly’, everything of possible significance in and to his/her message, for such a mass of detail would undoubtedly leave the target receptor group confused, frustrated, or just plain bored with it all. It would probably also prove far too expensive to produce and publish such a treatise. On the other hand, if s/he leaves too much essential information implicit, it is likely that receptors will not understand what is being said, either partially or not at all, or they will simply give up on the mes-
sage as being too difficult to carry on with. The key is balance—that is, allowing enough implicit material to challenge the audience and to encourage them to play a participatory role in the process of conceptualising the message—yet also including a sufficient amount of explicit detail to keep the communication moving smoothly from point to point, event to event, or scene to scene.

The issue of explicit versus implicit information—how much of the latter to permit as part of the unwritten message—is also a crucial factor in the practice of Bible translation. This is a matter that cannot be discussed here (cf Wendland 1985:85–94), but it directly affects the process of annotating a study Bible since whatever essential content (or intent) is not adequately conveyed linguistically as part of the translated text itself (for whatever reason) will presumably need to be incorporated within a footnote. By ‘essential’ is meant content that people (‘average’ members of the target group) absolutely require in order to correctly interpret and act upon the message that they happen to be receiving. Not everything needs to be said of course. To a greater or lesser degree the intended receptors participate in a common cognitive, sociocultural, experiential-sensory world and a relatively familiar literary framework that enables them to ‘read/listen between the lines’ of any verbal discourse and supply the required background information for a correct interpretation of the message to occur.

One way of describing this vital conceptualising process is the so-called ‘scenario model’ of communication:

We understand a written [and presumably also an oral] text as setting forth a succession of implicit and explicit mental pictures consisting of culturally specific scenes or schemes sketched by an author. These in turn evoke corresponding scenes or schemes in the mind of the reader [hearer] that are drawn from the reader’s own experience in the culture. With the scenarios suggested by the author as a starting point, the reader then carries out appropriate alterations to the settings or episodes as directed by clues in the text. In this way an author begins with the familiar and directs the reader to what is new (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992: 10).

This hermeneutical model is rather oversimplified in that it appears to be formulated in favor narrative-type discourse and thus ignores other possible interpretive strategies, such as the use of certain ‘logical’ or analogical patterns of hortatory text development that vary in accordance with extant genres of accepted oral or written argumentation. Furthermore, we frequently find associated with such visual ‘scenarios’ various verbal-based ‘scripts’ that outline or summarise conventionalised discourses appropriate to the particular cultural setting and social situation (e.g., a typical revival ‘altar call’, ‘testimony’ of deliverance, or evangelism ‘witness’ talk). Thus the briefest textual mention or allusion to familiar occasions like these can conceptually ‘trigger’, or cue, for readers most of the details that they need to know in order to interpret the utterance in which they are embedded. Problems quickly develop, however, when receptors do not have such a cognitive reservoir of common experience or shared
instruction pertaining to events that are characteristic of the culture and society concerned. This inevitably happens in the case of Bible translation, where the intended message must cross the additional communication barriers of language and time.

Another important factor for consideration in the interlingual communication process is the distinction between what Malina and Rohrbaugh term 'high-context' and 'low-context' societies. High-context peoples tend to presuppose a great deal more of the situational 'context' in their oral and written discourse (the latter being much rarer in occurrence). A relatively large amount of information is normally left implicit in the text—material that is expected to be accessed on the basis of common experience or which is conveyed either paralinguistically (e.g., by intonation) or non-verbally in a dramatised oral presentation (the communicative norm, e.g., gesture, facial expressions).

Thus, writers in such societies usually produce sketchy and impressionistic texts, leaving much to the reader's or hearer's imagination. They encode much information in widely known symbolic or stereotypical statements. In this way, they require the reader to fill in large gaps in the unwritten portion of the text (11).

The ancient Mediterranean world was characterised by high-context societies, and this fact is reflected in the literature of the age, narrative in particular, such as we have in the biblical gospels. Only the major details of a given episode are provided in the text, with very little extended explanation or supplementary description of characters, scenes, settings, and situations.

In contrast, much of the Western world consists of societies that are 'low-context' in nature. This means that writers, narrative authors in particular, tend to produce very detailed texts that require relatively little of readers to supply by way of background information. Therefore, when an author knows that he will be dealing with a subject that is new or unfamiliar to his audience, he will make explicit in his text all the supplementary content that is needed to correctly understand it. A serious problem may develop, however, when modern readers encounter the translation of a document like the Bible that was initially composed for a high-context audience. They often assume that the written text itself includes all the information needed for its own interpretation, like the literature that they are used to. They then proceed to construe this text from the perspective of their own Western world-view, value system, and way of life, which is very different indeed from that implicitly encoded by the biblical authors. African readers, on the other hand, happen to exemplify cultures that are much closer to those of the Bible (especially Jewish society), and they also prefer to communicate for the most part in a 'high-context' manner. However, a number of significant differences in respective ethos and outlook remain (e.g., with regard to the vast unseen spiritual 'world'). Hence, not recognising the pertinent signals in the translated text that establish the intended cultural context and lacking the explanatory resources necessary for understanding these variations and discrepancies, local receptors all too often misinterpret the text of Scripture on the basis of their own conceptual and behavioral framework (Hope 1997:12; cf the examples given below in section 5).
Thus there is a twofold purpose for the supplementary notes that are provided in a standard study Bible, such as the one being prepared for the Chichewa-speaking people. First, a process of 'decontextualisation' must be embarked upon whereby the resident ('default') Chewa cognitive environment is explicitly counteracted in places where it would distort or even eliminate ('overwrite') the intended sense of Scripture (based on the consensus of current scholarship), either in a particular instance or on a global level throughout a given book. The point is not to deliberately detract from or disparage the indigenous cultural viewpoint and life-style, but simply to show how and in what respects it differs from a biblical perspective. In some cases, it will also be necessary to divest the text from certain contra-Scriptural ideas and practices that originate in the Western world and have negatively influenced African society or ecclesiology (e.g. with regard to church polity—1 Pt 5:1–2). Second, the translation will need to be 'recontextualised' in terms of the biblical background information that is required to interpret the text correctly. The aim is to provide to the extent possible (given the limitations of a non-personal, interlingual, cross-cultural communication situation) an 'understanding [of] the range of meanings that would have been plausible to a first-century reader of the Synoptic Gospels' in order to 'facilitate a reading that is consonant with the initial cultural contexts of those writings' (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:14). In short, it is 'the translator's [annotator's] job ... not only to mediate the text, but also the relevant [conceptual] contexts to the target readers' (Hope 1997:12).

5 ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE NEED FOR CONTEXTUALISATION IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

In this section a number of examples will be given (in textual order) to suggest the nature and degree of linguistic and cultural modification that may be required in Chichewa with special reference to the 'contextual' (3.7) and 'translational' (3.8) type of footnotes as surveyed above. A communication gap, or even a complete break-

14 I am using the terms 'decontextualise' and 'recontextualise' in a manner that is quite different from the usage of Malina & Rohrbaugh 1992:13–14.

15 In view of space limitations, it will often be necessary to provide information that pertains only to the 'most likely' reading—that is, instead of the full 'range of meanings' possible. Among the key social values of a biblical setting that would need explication for a contemporary Chewa audience are these: the dominant 'challenge-riposte' form of argumentation, social 'stereotypes' and 'deviance labeling', the female-controlled 'gossip network', the 'three-zone [human] personality', the Roman 'patronage' system, the 'surrogate family' of Christians, and Pharisaic rules regarding 'purity and pollution'. Other values that are similar to (but not exactly the same as) indigenous Chewa ones but which may need to be highlighted in relation to a given biblical text include the following: non-ancestral 'demon possession', 'ingroup/outgroup' tensions, 'honor/shame' relationships, the concept of 'limited good', the 'dyadic [human] personality', the social importance of children, and the 'marriage of clans' (Malina & Rohrbaugh :19–23; cf also Pilch & Malina 1993:v-viii).
down, frequently occurs due to the ‘conceptual interference’ that takes place when an indigenous, culturally conditioned perspective (‘worldview’) is superimposed upon the biblical one as the text of Scripture is read or heard. Such barriers to accurate message transmission may arise on account of either an apparent (but erroneous) correspondence or a more ostensive (but inexplicable) clash with regard to the respective forms and/or functions of the biblical (SL) and local (RL) entity, event, or situation that is under consideration.

The following selection of examples gives a varied indication of where potential problem points are likely to occur in the Chichewa text—of ‘hearing/reading the Bible through Achewa ears/eyes’ (cf Bowe 1998). This is an exercise in ‘hyper-contextualisation’ since it is highly unlikely that any single receptor would misconstrue all, or even a majority, of the cases listed below. These instances are also hypothetical in the sense that the study Bible portion of Luke has not yet been completed and published. Thus the comments supplied merely serve to highlight (due to the lack of space) by way of illustration the general nature of the difficulty—whether cultural/conceptual or semantic/linguistic—and to intimate the direction that a given ‘contextualised’ footnote might take in order to resolve it. These particular passages call special attention to the possible distorting influence of traditional religious beliefs and customary practices upon the average receptor.16 In order to render the discussion accessible to non-Chewa speakers, it is provided in English and keyed for convenience to the NIV text, except where certain local technical terms are in focus, which are then recorded in parentheses.

What is it then that ‘sparks’ or stimulates a particular note in the Chichewa translation? To a great extent this process arises out of long, careful personal experience in communicating the message of the Scriptures in the vernacular and in varied congregational or compositional settings, for example, preaching, teaching, witnessing, counseling, literature development, and Bible translation.17 Such a background helps

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16 It should be noted that any ‘distortion’ is evaluated as such on the basis of the original text and context of Scripture. A cognitive transfer, or ‘transculturation’, of the biblical message must inevitably be effected, however, when it is applied to the thinking and behavior of a specific contemporary audience, that is, in order to render it meaningfully relevant to their everyday lives. Unfortunately, there will not be space enough in the proposed Chichewa study Bible to cater for this particular didactic need. For an interesting account of one of the earliest recorded instances of such a hermeneutical success, namely, how the gospel was conceptually transformed via an epic poem for the ancient Saxons of Germany, see Murphy 1989.

17 I was greatly assisted in this ‘problem-discovery’ exercise by Rev Salimo Hachibamba, my long-standing (25+ years) colleague in the ministries of Bible translation, seminary teaching, and local congregational supervision. Rev Hachibamba will be heading up a parallel pilot project in the Chitonga language of Zambia. Helpful comments were also received from Rev Joseph Shakauma, Field Translation Assistant of the Bible Society of Zambia, from third year students in the Lutheran Seminary where I teach, and from members of the Chichewa Study Bible Editorial Committee, with whom I discussed a number of these issues. None of these individuals are responsible, however, for any error that appears here as a result of my presentation of the outcome of our various deliberations, whether in English or Chichewa. Certain valu-
to alert a person as to where there may well be a potential problem point with respect
to certain elements of a particular passage, even when read in its textual context. In
other words, there is a strong likelihood that the intended sense of a given word,
phrase, clause, or even the entire verse will be totally misunderstood or will be too dif­
ficult to understand at all. This lack of communication is usually occasioned by some
manner of linguistic, conceptual, or cultural mismatch that arises from within the
overall receptor language situation. Without some kind of guidance therefore in the
form of a footnote, it is highly likely that either the wrong meaning (even granting a
certain amount of flexibility or leeway in this regard) will be conveyed, or no meaning
at all is transmitted (due to excessive difficulty or obscurity) to a majority of the target
constituency for whom the study Bible is being composed.

1:7 ‘Elizabeth was barren’ How did people know that the lack of children was her
fault? In a matrilineal, matrilocal Chewa traditional setting, it is the husband who
would first be suspected. If a woman truly is discerned (by divination) to be barren,
then either witchcraft would be suspected or else the anger of ancestral spirits on
account of a certain moral violation perpetrated by someone in the two families con­
cerned. In any case, as in Bible times, barrenness puts a severe social strain on any

1:9 ‘burn incense’ What was the purpose of this incense-burning rite? A ‘medicine
man’ (sing’anga) will perform the same ritual in order to chase evil spirits (ziwanda)
away from a homestead or village. Could this in any way be mistakenly connected with
v 7 to suggest that Zechariah was engaged in a magical attempt to cure his wife’s bar­
renness? To some this notion might be reinforced by the immediate appearance of the
angel (v 11) after his sacrifice (implied in this context) and the corporate prayers of the
people (i.e, to the clan ancestors [l], v 10). This ready answer to petitionary prayer (+/-
some mystical appearance, e.g., a large snake/python) occurs regularly in the rain rites
carried out at the local shrine. From a Christian point of view, the fact that
Zechariah’s prayer was ‘heard’ and will result in a child suggests that God has not
heard or reacted favorably to the prayers of people who remain childless.

1:19 ‘I stand in the presence of God’ According to Bantu customs of politeness, one
does not ‘stand’ in the presence of an elder, let alone a chief. Instead, one ‘sits’ or
‘kneels’ to show the proper deference or respect. This angel ‘Gabriel’ is either greater
in authority than ‘God’, or else he is manifesting an attitude that is extremely rude or
arrogant.

able background information was also offered by Malina and Rohrbaugh’s ‘commentary’ on the
synoptic gospels (1992; hereafter, M&R) from a ‘social-scientific’ perspective. This text helped
to confirm and to elucidate the nature of certain specific problem areas that are likely to be
generated by a distinctive and disparate source cultural-religious viewpoint or customary prac­
tice.
1:27 'to a virgin pledged to be married' There is no one-word equivalent for the concept of 'virginity' in Chichewa (cf present rendering, namwali wathunthu 'a whole maiden'), nor is this state required for an honorable 'marriage' as in a biblical social setting (M&R :288). On the contrary, in some areas the custom of engaging in an act of ritual sexual intercourse is still practiced as part of a young woman's traditional initiation ceremony. Similarly, the Jewish custom of inviolate engagement ('betrothal') is not known although there is the non-equivalent practice of 'pledging' whereby a young man promises to marry a girl (kufunsira mbeta/kutomera) and seals this with a ceremonial gift to her parents.

1:41 'the baby leaped in her womb' Such a mysterious internal event takes place, according to customary belief, due to the influence of witchcraft being exercised upon the fetus by a malicious envious person (in this case, by Mary!). The Hebrew view of this being the sign of a prophetic call by God may be worth a note (M&R :291). What is more surprising is the fact that Elizabeth then proceeds to speak about Mary's own pregnancy, which surely would not have as yet been apparent; this is socially inappropriate (inauspicious) behavior from a Bantu point of view. Elizabeth's subsequent mention of 'joy' (v 44) further complicates the reading of this passage by introducing a seemingly contradictory emotion on the part of her unborn child.

1:59 'circumcise the child' The Chewa people do not engage in the practice of ritual circumcision, and therefore an indigenous word to refer to it does not occur in the language. In translation a formally correspondent term was borrowed from the neighboring Yao language (kuumbaLz). However, there is no real functional equivalence here because circumcision for the Yao occurs much later in life and serves as an important part of the ritual process of youth maturation in this society, which includes many Muslim adherents. Thus the circumcision of the eight day old baby Jesus sounds like a very strange, even cruel custom. An explanation of the great socio-religious significance of this rite in an OT setting would be essential here (cf M&R :293).

1:80 'he lived in the desert' As in the original biblical setting, to go off to a wilderness area to live by oneself is viewed as being very deviant social behavior (M&R :175,301). The motives cannot be positively construed in any case but may be attributed either to possession by an evil spirit (cf 'became strong in spirit') or to the individual's desire to practice sorcery in secret.

2:8 'shepherds living out in the fields... at night' What kind of herdsmen are these, any central African peasant would ask? How can one 'watch over' any sort of animal at night? And why do they 'live' out in the bush, as the Chewa translation reports? Obviously some background information about Palestinian methods of small animal husbandry is necessary to clarify this picture. In any case, one's opinion of these strange shepherds would be just as negative as it would be in the original biblical setting, but for different reasons (cf M&R :296).

2:22 'time of their purification' A comment on this passage should clarify for readers
that Mary's 'purification' 40 days after giving birth according to Mosaic legislation (cf Lev 12:2-8) has nothing at all to do with the traditional Chewa custom of 'taking the child' (kutenga mwana). The latter is intended to mystically strengthen and protect the child against sorcery and also to sanction a couple's resumption of sexual relations. The importance of levitical regulations concerning purity and pollution needs to be pointed out in connection with many of the controversies that Christ had with the Pharisees over their amplified legal system and formalistic approach to such ritual behavior (cf M&R :318-320).

5:19 'they went up on the roof' This scenario is unnatural (actually quite extraordinary) in the case of the normal central African house either in the village (where roofs are made of grass) or in towns (where they usually consist of thin corrugated metal sheets). In addition to an explanatory footnote here, an illustration in the text at this point would be of great assistance (cf 17:21).

6:18 'those troubled by evil spirits...’ The great ontological difference between 'evil spirits' in a biblical and a Bantu sociocultural setting needs to be carefully explained, perhaps better as a glossary entry due to the ubiquity of this problem in the NT (cf the 'cosmic social hierarchy' of Scripture in M&R :312). In short, the former are personal, but non-human and diabolical (Satanic) in nature and origin, whereas in a Chewa setting they are essentially human and either associated with the practice of sorcery or with (justifiably) aggrieved ancestral spirits that need to be placated (cf also 13:11). The Chewa 'medicine man' (sing'anga) also heals diseases, which is apparently what the disciples were empowered to do (9:1).

6:24 'woe to you who are rich' This seemingly blanket condemnation by Christ of all 'rich' persons, fits in well with a Chewa world-view. However, the popular basis for such a stereotype is somewhat augmented in comparison with an ancient Palestinian perspective. For the latter, the anthropological principle of the 'limited good' makes it axiomatic that those who are wealthy have invariably gained such economic standing at the expense of others, namely, those who are socially and politically defenseless (the 'poor'), by means of deception, extortion, thievery, or some other injustice (M&R :324-325). In a Bantu setting, however, the rich obtain their wealth through the overt and covert practice of magic (mankhwala) and sorcery (usiti).

6:48 'foundation on rock' Traditional houses are never built on (a) rock, for this would have just the opposite of the intended (biblical) effect, namely, stability. Rather, they are constructed 'without a foundation' (v 49), that is, so that the wall poles may be sunk deeply into the ground for support. Thus, the nature of customary housing in the original setting needs to be explained so as to counteract the apparent contradiction in the translation.

7:37 'an alabaster jar of perfume' The woman's strange—or worse, taboo!—behavior here (from a Chewa social viewpoint) is given an added negative twist by the very language that is employed to describe it in translation. In particular, the term for 'jar'
that has been used (nsupa), while referentially accurate, carries the unfortunate implication by association of the indigenous practice of sorcery (ufiti).

8:30 ‘what is your name?’ So also a medicine man or diviner will cleverly manipulate a spirit of possession to get it to reveal its hidden name. As in the case of biblical peoples, ‘the power to use a name is the power to control’ (M&R:337). After gaining this vital personal information, the ‘doctor’ can employ his magic to expel the spirit or to determine the magical means whereby the patient can control it.

8:33 ‘(the demons) went into the pigs’ The fact that these demons (evil spirits) went to ‘possess’ the herd of pigs is not strange from a traditional African ontological perspective. Human spirits can reside in animals and vice-versa. It may be significant to point out however that both demon possessed people and pigs were considered ‘unclean’ (polluted) according to Jewish ritual legislation. So it seems as if their fatal ‘coupling’ here is no coincidence.

8:43 ‘a woman had been... bleeding’ This woman would appear to have been the victim of a sorcerer’s attack who, either out of spite or on behalf of a jealous client, desired to prevent her from getting married, from having children, or from entering normal society. The fact that such hemorrhaging made her ceremonially unclean (hence an ostracised person during the entire 12 year period of her affliction) with a transmittable ‘defilement’ (in this case, by touching Jesus, v 47) will need to be explained. In keeping with the practice of a Middle-Eastern ‘traditional healer’, Christ restores this woman (a ‘daughter’ within his spiritual family’, v 48) at long last to her biological community (on the anthropological distinction between ‘disease’ and ‘illness’, see M&R:315–316).

8:55 ‘her spirit returned’ According to popular belief, such a miraculous resuscitation occurs when a powerful medicine man is able to reverse the effects of bewitchment. The latter occurs when a witch/wizard has captured and mystically confined the spirit of a person in order to ‘eat’ his/her body after it has been buried.

9:29 ‘his appearance changed’ The amazing transfiguration account calls to mind the mysterious bodily transformation that certain wizards are able to effect through magical means. In this instance the purpose of the rite taking place would be to initiate three new members (Peter, James, John) into Christ’s coven to correspond with the trio of senior wizards present (Jesus, Moses, Elijah). The isolated location (a ‘mountain’, v 28) as well as the appearance of lightning (v 29) and a thick cloud (v 34) support the mysterious scene that is set in this pericope.

9:39 ‘a spirit seizes him’ Such an unfortunate, physically harmful experience is similar to that which is reported when a malicious gremlin (ndondocha) sent by a sorcerer (usually male) attacks his victim or when someone is beset by an avenging spirit (chivanda). From the perspective of the original setting, mention should be made of the dire social ramifications of such cases of demonic possession. Not only was the
life of his only son in danger (the end of his family line), but the father himself would be liable to ostracisation by the entire community (M&R :344).

9:60 ‘let the dead bury their own dead’ The funeral of an adult is perhaps the supreme ritual-religious event in Bantu society. Death is a (traditional) rite of socio-spiritual transition whereby a person moves from one state of being to another, and this must be celebrated communally for the well-being of the group. Those who desire to do something else during a period of mourning (e.g., ‘proclaim the kingdom of God’) are not only regarded as being anti-social, but they may also be accused of causing the death of the deceased through witchcraft. Jesus’ either-or challenge here needs to be explained in terms of its current textual and situational setting in order to avoid misunderstanding, i.e., that he has no concern for traditional customs or the feelings of those who are experiencing deep personal loss. In addition, the great cost of discipleship that Christ is here demanding needs to be underscored in terms of the original cultural setting. It would mean a personal break ‘with one’s biological kin group and the social network in which it is embedded’—all this in order to ‘adopt a socially deviant life-style away from home’ (M&R :345).

10:16 ‘listens to you, listens to me’ Pronouncements of solidarity like this need to be understood in terms of the ancient Mediterranean ‘dyadic view’ of personality, according to which ‘every person is embedded in other persons (especially the family) and derives his/her sense of identity from the group to which he/she belongs’ (M&R :346). Now this viewpoint is not at all foreign to the Bantu communal perspective on life, but the fact that Christ is here claiming such a unified outlook and commitment with regard to his ‘surrogate family’ of believers may require some additional explanation.

11:34 ‘the eye is the light of the body’ At the time of Christ, people believed that the eye operated sort of like a flashlight, providing ‘light’ for them to see (M&R :65). A further semantic complication in this complex metaphor is the close connection that the eye was believed to have with a person’s ‘heart’, that is, ‘the zone of emotion fused thought’ according to the ‘three-zone’ concept of human personality in Greco-Roman philosophy (:356). Similarly, those who were regarded as being ‘blind’ had the ‘darkness’ of wickedness emanating from their eyes, and ultimately their hearts as well (cf 6:39; Mt 6:22–23; 23:16).

11:44 ‘woe to you’ This manner of expression is typical of a curse (temberero) that certain magically empowered individuals or sorcerers utter in order to bring misfortune upon a potential victim or enemy. The socio-spiritual implications of Christ’s words need to be pointed out in this regard (i.e., ‘how shameless you are!’—M&R :323). The present ‘woe’ is especially suspect in this regard because of its connection with ‘graves’, which would be understood as symbolic of death—though the significance of the qualifier ‘unmarked’ is unclear. A similar problematic utterance occurs in 12:20 where another apparent curse (rather than a pronouncement of judgment) is
marked by the pejorative vocative 'fool'. The latter refers, not to someone of deficient mental capabilities (as the Chichewa term implies), but to a person who deliberately defies God's principles of righteous living out of greedy (or overly proud) self interests (cf M&R :357). The often sweeping, hyperbolic, metaphoric, and antithetical nature of Christ's arguments, accusations, and criticisms here and elsewhere in the gospels needs to be clarified in a note (cf 18:24). Such strong language was characteristic of the 'challenge-riposte' manner of repartee in an ancient Mediterranean agrarian 'honor-shame' society. Thus any challenge, for example, to Christ's spiritual and religious authority on the part of his opponents, had to be verbally met and defeated by means of a more forceful and credible response in order to preserve the honor of one's name, cause, or truth claim (cf M&R :306-310).

12:4 'those who kill the body' The most dreaded murderer in Chewa traditional society is the mystical, necrophagous 'witch/wizard' (mfiti), who 'kills the body' in order to 'eat' it later at night. The conceptual difficulty in this context arises when such a 'killer' is contrastively and implicitly compared with God (v 5), which produces a connotative clash that somehow needs to be resolved by means of an explanatory footnote.

13:32 'go tell that fox' This utterance again illustrates the great problem that is presented by many biblical metaphors and similes, namely, a fundamental inequivalence with respect to the underlying basis or ground of figurative comparison, which is implicit in the textual context. Thus 'fox' (lit, 'wild dog', nkhandwe) in a Chewa oral narrative setting is associated with stupidity, rather than aggressive craftiness as the original would suggest with reference to 'Herod'. If this sense and implication cannot be rendered in the translation itself, then it needs to be conveyed in footnote (in this and in similar cases) because it is part of the intended meaning of the passage.

14:18 'they all began to make excuses' The behavior of these men does not make sense in a Bantu social context: Why refuse a free meal—and to give such seemingly lame excuses on top of it (vv 18-20)? The complex rules regarding reciprocal table fellowship in Bible times will have to be explained and the fact that such 'dinners were important social occasions that were used to cement [and define] social relations' (M&R :365). The great societal and religious significance of the subsequent invitation to 'the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind' may also require some explication in that this is not a mere charity case. Rather, it figuratively refers to the dynamic unification process taking place within Christ's new community of faith, one that extended across all social barriers—and ethnic ones as well (cf 13:39). Luke's gospel is full of references and allusions to meals and proper meal behavior, with the ultimate instance being recorded in 22:14-20 where 'the critical importance of table fellowship as both reality and symbol of social [-spiritual] cohesion and shared values' is dramatically highlighted (M&R :402).
18:16 'kingdom of heaven... (children) According to traditional Bantu thinking, children are born in complete innocence (sinlessness) and are therefore morally close to both God and the ancestors. The present passage reinforces this normative presupposition, which therefore needs to be corrected in a footnoted comment. The same principle applies to other areas where contradictory or conflicting local assumptions must be explicitly confronted and dispelled. On the other hand, certain cultural correspondences may also be worthy of a comment, where significant. For example, the disciples' action in 'rebuking' people for bringing their children to Christ (v 15) is in complete accord with local social practice: Great ('big') persons ought not be bothered with the distraction of little children. Thus Christ's contra-cultural invitation here is just as surprising in a Bantu setting. The significance of Jesus 'touching' them in blessing also needs some explanation. The shockingly high mortality rate (nearly a third of live births would be dead before age six) meant that a majority of these children (60%+) would not outlive their teenage years (M&R :305). Thus Christ's words are not only a comfort—that is, children too belong to his Kingdom—they are also an implicit warning to parents to have their offspring 'enter in' before it is too late!

23:53 'tomb cut in the rock' A 'grave' (manda) cannot be cut into rock in a Chewa local environment; it is always dug down into the ground. Diggers of a known sorcerer's grave will sometimes encounter a magical rock that prevents them from completing their work if they have not first carried out some special cabalistic stipulation made by the person before he died. Once that esoteric requirement or instruction has been satisfied, the rock will mysteriously disappear. A further complication in this context is the further description that 'no one had yet been laid' in this particular tomb, implying that it had been dug (or hewn) in advanced before the death of the person for whom it was meant. Such action would be regarded as an evil omen, however, in a Chewa setting, one that could actually hasten the demise of the deceased. In Bantu custom (as for all peoples of the ancient Roman world) the obligation of providing a proper burial weighs heavily on the family of the deceased. Therefore, the absence of any of Christ's relatives here is indeed awful, for it would bring upon them all the curse of their ancestors. On the other hand, the actions of Joseph are highly significant since they identify him as being a member of Christ's 'surrogate family' in the most public way possible. His career as respected Jewish leader (v 50) in the community thus came to an immediate end.

24:1 'women took the spices' According to Chewa custom, women do not prepare the corpse of a man, and nobody ever tampers with a body after it has been 'buried' (which is 'witchcraft'). Thus the disparate Jewish convention in this regard would have to be explained. An additional problem in this context is that the women's action seems to correspond with a certain local funerary practice (kusonjola). Accordingly, people apprehensively go to a cemetery early in the morning after a recent burial to see whether there are signs (in the earth around the grave) that evil spirits in the form
of wild animals have arisen from the corpse (kusanduka) due to witchcraft. Such contra-textual notions may be corrected by a detailed note concerning the theological significance of Christ’s resurrection (v 6). This constitutes the climax of Luke’s gospel (as for the others) and vindicates the central claim of his narrative testimony that Jesus is truly ‘the Christ’, the Son of God/Man, and the Redeemer of all humanity (cf 24:46–49; 1:1–4). Furthermore, Christ’s death and resurrection has formed the basis for the Christian message for every age ever since (24:48; cf Ac 1:8; 2:23–32).

5 FOLLOW-UP: TOWARDS THE COMPLETION OF A CONTEXTUALISED STUDY BIBLE IN CHICHIEWA

As was noted earlier, the Chichewa study Bible is in its initial stage of preparation. An editorial team has been appointed and introduced to the task via several workshops. It is currently carrying out the job of drafting suitable notes for the gospel of Luke, which will be published as a trial portion. Compositionally diverse review committees, however, need to be established and specialist reviewers identified who will be able to examine the various drafts of these notes, critique them for accuracy and appropriateness, and then submit their written evaluation to the team for consideration. In addition, a number of independent ‘research assistants’ will be selected in order to test these drafts, both formally and informally, among certain groups that comprise the main target constituency—monolingual Chewa rural pastors, evangelists/catechists, and congregational lay leaders. As much feedback as possible needs to be gathered so that the editorial team can accurately determine how well (or poorly) the extratextual message of their supplementary notes is getting across and being received in terms of such vital factors as understandability, pertinence, clarity, suitability, and overall usability or usefulness.

The central question that confronts all participants in this study Bible project is this: Given the severe limitations of space (and to a certain extent also of time and resources), how can the process of contextualisation be maximized in order to prepare a select number of notes that will really help those for whom they are primarily intended? In short, the issue here concerns that ever-present difficulty of transforming theory into reality. It is one thing to be fully committed to a policy of ‘indigenising’ these comments, that is, on the part of the editorial team and project administration. It is quite another to realise such a policy in practice, namely, by means of a set of procedures that will do the most to achieve the desired result—to enable a majority of those who comprise the principal target audience to ‘recreate in their minds [all] the relevant [semiotic] contexts’ needed for a correct interpretation of the overall biblical message (Hope 1997:8).

18 The capable Malawi-based Editorial Team is headed up by a Coordinator, Rev Dr W R Kawale, and consists of two half-time Editor-Composers, Bishop P A Kalilombe and Dr F L Chingota.
It would be impossible simply to take the notes of an existing study Bible in English (like those of the NIV sampled in section 3, or even a selection of assorted notes from several such editions) and translate them directly into Chichewa. Even an adaptation from English is a risky business because the conceptual process still begins in a foreign language and its associated culture (world-view, value system, way-of-life, etc). Thus there is always the danger that certain alien ideas, perspectives, presuppositions, emphases, and other elements will implicitly and seemingly innocuously get imported into Chichewa. The editorial team obviously cannot generate notes out of thin air or based solely on individual experience and personal knowledge. They will have to consult a variety of English ‘sources’—that is, in addition to other study Bibles, also commentaries, Bible dictionaries, encyclopedias, and lexicons. However, their challenge will be to cognitively access all such external resources from a local viewpoint and then to transfer what information is both necessary and usable into an appropriate Chichewa form of expression and field of experience. All reviewers will in turn be charged with the task of assessing these materials in a similar manner, based on the three main principles of fidelity to the biblical message, idiomacity of linguistic verbalisation in the receptor language, and relevance to the current sociocultural and religious setting.

The key to the entire endeavor will be the implementation of a sufficiently broad, diverse, prolonged, and intensive system of testing so that the annotation process can be effectively and continuously evaluated while it is being done. It is not possible to go into the mechanics of such testing procedures here (see, for example, Wendland 1998:199-203); the point is to ensure that this essential component of the work is not ignored or left until much later to integrate into the entire programme. As was mentioned above, it is hoped that trained independent ‘text-testers’ can be engaged who will be able to channel critical feedback, whether positive or negative, from the target user-group to the team at the very outset, that is, beginning with the initial drafts of the notes for Luke.19 It may also be possible to interest local researchers (for example, in the theology department of the University of Malawi) in making a studied investigation of certain aspects of the specific need that is being addressed by these footnotes, for example, by assessing the basic exegetical competence, lacunae, or weaknesses that are reflected in vernacular sermons.20 This will enable the editorial team to take such...

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19 These field testers need to be trained not only to collect data, but also to sort out and perhaps even categorise the diverse responses that they receive. This is to prevent the editorial team from being flooded with information that either they will be reluctant to plow through at all or which will unduly delay their progress. Similarly the various review committees too must be taught how to present their findings in the most efficient way possible.

20 This research effort will be facilitated by the presence of one of the author-editors on the theological faculty of Chancellor College in Zomba, Malawi. Other persons who have expressed an interest in this project are the staff of several seminaries and Bible colleges in both Malawi and Zambia. It will be important of course to ensure that the comments generated from such sources are based upon the opinions expressed by members of the target group and not the theological students themselves or their instructors.
widespread reactions and diverse background information into consideration at the earliest possible stage and hence to modify their approach, wherever necessary, sooner rather than later (and risk not making any adaptations at all).

Another effective means of evaluating the Chewa material, particularly with respect to the area of contextualisation, will hopefully be put into practice at an early stage, and that is by engaging in a contemporaneous pilot project in the Tonga language of Zambia. The work of one editorial committee can then be employed comparatively to enrich, enlighten, evaluate, and correct the other as they both move forward to completion and eventual publication.21

The production of a carefully prepared study Bible in Chichewa (and Chitonga) will be a major step forward in the crucial effort to effectively ‘contextualise Bible reading’ in this part of Africa. This will, under the Spirit’s leading, enable readers (and listeners alike) to become better ‘Bereans’ (Ac 17:11; 1 Co 2:11)—believers who are more thoroughly equipped to eagerly examine the Scriptures with greater understanding, insight, and the confidence also to apply its transformational message to their own lives, times, and sociocultural setting.

WORKS CONSULTED


21 A cooperative checking process of this nature was carried out during the production of the two common-language translations into Chichewa and Chitonga. It worked better going from Chewa to Tonga however since many more of the latter people speak the former as a second language than vice-versa. This overall comparative procedure was facilitated by the fact that I was the translation consultant responsible for both translation programs. It is hoped that these initial study Bibles in Chichewa and Chitonga can in turn serve as valuable, pre-contextualised ‘models’ (in either completed or partial form) for similar projects to be carried out in the Bantu languages of south-central Africa.


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