Edwin W. Smith (1876-1957): a precursor of the modern professional era in Bible translation. [1]

By W. John Young

Synopsis: Edwin W. Smith was an important figure in African studies in the first half of the twentieth century with expertise in anthropology, African religions and linguistics. His ideas on Bible translation and missiology were among the most progressive of his era. After a brief outline of Smith's life and work this paper considers his contribution to Bible translation as [a] a practitioner in Africa followed [b] by his Bible Society career beginning 100 years ago and culminating [c] in his influential tour of India in 1938-9 and concluding [d] with his mature insights and an evaluation of his contribution to Bible translation.

Brief biographical details.[2]

Edwin William Smith, born 7 September 1876 in South Africa where his parents served as missionaries, came from the Primitive Methodist[3] tradition, and after education in England worked in Primitive Methodist missions in South and Central Africa, 1898-1915.

He left Africa in 1915, spent some time on the western front in Belgium as a war chaplain, was invalided out and almost exactly 100 years ago, in June 1916, began a 23 year career with the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS). He held several posts with the Society and finally (1933-39) was Editorial Superintendent responsible for translations. Alongside this he was a prolific author, active in anthropological circles and societies related to Africa. After five years in the USA where he taught African Studies at Hartford and Nashville he continued writing until his death on 23 December 1957, aged 81.

Bible translation.

[a] Smith as a Bible Translation Practitioner.

Smith's father, John Smith, was head of Primitive Methodist missions in the 1890s. Edwin gave him secretarial help as reports came in from their new mission in Central Africa. When John Smith highlighted the need for a Bible translation from the original languages into the

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[1] Paper given at International Conference on The Bible in African and Asian Christianity Liverpool Hope University 27-29 June 2016. This develops aspects of a short paper on Smith's wider literary work included in the collection of papers at the Methodist Mission History Conference 'Methodist Missions and the Printed Word', Sarum College Salisbury, November 2006. (http://www.methodistheritage.org.uk/missionary-history-young-edwin-smith-written-word-2006.pdf). Smalley, W.E., *Translation as Mission*, *Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement*, Macon University Press, Macon, Georgia, 1991, 67, describes Smith as such a precursor.

[2] For further biographical details see Young, W. John, *The Quiet Wise Spirit: Edwin W. Smith (1876-1957) and Africa*, Peterborough: Epworth Press, 2002, referred to as *QWS*. Young W. John, 'The Legacy of Edwin W. Smith', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol 25, No 3, July 2001, 126-30 (http://www.dacb.org/stories/zambia/legacy_smith.html), is an overview article. McVeigh, M., *God in Africa: Conceptions of God in African Traditional Religion and Christianity*, Cape Cod, Mass.: Claude Starke, 1974, discussed Smith's religious ideas.

[3] On Primitive Methodism, Milburn, Geoffrey, *Primitive Methodism*, Peterborough: Epworth, 2002.

local Ila language, Edwin took this as a call to be a Bible translator and enrolled at once in Greek classes at Birkbeck College. After some medical training at Livingstone College in London he returned to Africa in 1898 and began serious study of African languages, first of all Sotho with the French Protestant missionaries in Lesotho and during a prolonged stay in Aliwal North in South Africa (due to the Boer War). He arrived in Zambia[4] in 1902 and in three years had reduced the Ila language to writing and completed a substantial grammar and dictionary, *A Handbook of the Ila Language,* (Oxford University Press: 1907). He was always amazed and impressed by 'the extraordinary richness and flexibility of the language'[5] and his *Handbook* was a remarkable achievement. Pauluse Kaiyobe was his right hand man in this venture and Smith gleaned his vocabulary and honed his conversational skills as he constructed buildings, held clinics and went about his pastoral work. In 1994 Ernst Wendland, Bible Society Consultant in Lusaka, said that although Smith used an older framework 'the accuracy, (I believe), detail, and data are all present should anyone care to rewrite his results using more modern terms and a current linguistic theory.'[6] Much later the Fowlers used data left by Smith and his successors to create an Ila dictionary and other literature.[7] His interleaved Ila Handbook had numerous undated annotations which have been assessed by Ena Fowler who suggested a different way of analysing Ila tenses.[8] Smith admired 'the extraordinary richness and flexibility of the language.'[9] and in 2002 Ena Fowler declared that 'it is a remarkable language.'[10]

The Bible Society published his *St Mark in Ila* in 1906 and after furlough (1907-09) and the energy draining demands of opening Kasenga Mission he returned to translation with Matthew's gospel. He would draft several chapters in Ila and discuss them with Pauluse Kaiyobe. For example, on 25 November 1909, 'This morning I completed the first draft of Matt. After dinner read chap 1 & part of 2 with Pauluse & then typed it in triplicate. Before reading with him I am carefully revising it word by word with the Greek.'[11] He then typed

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[4] Modern names are used. In 1902 it was North Western Rhodesia.

[5] Smith Edwin W., and Dale Andrew M., *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia,* 2 Vols, London: Macmillan, 1920. Referred to as *ISP.* ii, 310,

[6] Letter to author from E. Wendland, 12 September 1994.

[7] Fowler, D.G., *A Dictionary of Ila Usage, 1860-1960*, International African Institute, Hamburg: LIT, 2000. Fowler, Dennis G., *The Ila Speaking: Records of a Lost World,* International African Institute, Hamburg: LIT, 2002.

[8] Mrs Fowler shows how Smith and others of that generation used classical grammars as their patterns for understanding Bantu languages. This was not the best way of describing these languages. See Ena Fowler in Fowler, D.G., *A Dictionary of Ila Usage*, 1860-1960, International African Institute, Hamburg: LIT, 2000, 849-882 and in Fowler, Dennis G., *The Ila Speaking, Records of a Lost World, International African Institute,* Hamburg: LIT, 2002, 197-204. The latter title suggests that the Ila of today has changed from that of 100years ago.

[9] *ISP,* ii, 310,

[10] Fowler, 2002, 204.

[11] Smith, Kasenga diary, 25 November, 1909, SPMMS.

copies for further discussion. This continued for the next three years as he worked through the New Testament. [12]

An Ila translation committee was formed with representatives (European and African) of the Primitive Methodists joining those of the Anglican and Brethren in Christ missions who were active on the southern borders of Bwila. Smith was editor-in-chief and drafted most of the translation with a few books done by his colleague, the Revd J. W. Price.[13] The British and Foreign Bible Society published the final version in 1915 so the team would have followed the Bible Society Rules of 1911 which required faithful, understandable versions 'as literal as the idiom of the language will permit'.[14] Smith's version was revised from time to time and by 1978 there were differences in translation and orthography e.g. in the Lord's Prayer where one line was completely changed. The Lord's Prayer in the completely fresh version of 2015 differs but not markedly from Smith's 1909 handwritten draft. Altogether, the 1915 version was a great achievement but in those early days he realised that translations by foreigners would always be provisional[15] and should be superseded by those of first language speakers. Therefore the latest, 2015, version would gladden Smith's heart in that mother-tongue speakers were the main players in its production.

In 1909 Smith joined the Royal Anthropological Institute and during his second tour in Zambia he and Andrew Dale, a District officer, used anthropology to help them understand the people they served. They produced the classic text, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia,* (1920). Smith was the main author and the 2 volume study established Smith's reputation in anthropology. [16] Smith and Dale saw language and culture as complementary and in the *Ila Speaking Peoples* Smith reflected on how to revise the Ila grammar[17] and dictionary.[18] Altogether, Smith's linguistic and cultural research as well as his translation work affirmed the Ila as people with a sophisticated language and far from simple way of

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[12] Smith's MS and typescript for the Ila New Testament are found in the Smith Papers, Methodist Missionary Society Archives, Fiches 532-553.

[13] Smith, E.W., *The Way of the White Fields in Rhodesia*, London: World Dominion Press, 1928, 109. The Revd John Price joined the Ila mission in 1906 and became proficient in Ila. He translated Acts, Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Jude.

[14] *Rules for the Guidance of Translators, Revisers & Editors, working in conjunction with the British and Foreign Bible Society,* London, The British and Foreign Bible Society, 146, Queen Victoria Street, 1911, p.8. A copy of these Rules is place with Smith's MS in the MMS archives. Nevertheless the Bible Society was experimenting with colloquial versions of scripture portions around the same time, see *A Fountain Unsealed,* Popular Illustrated Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1910-1911, BFBS 1911, 18-20.

[15] *Aldersgate Magazine,* 1911, 485ff.

[16] Smith Edwin W., and Dale Andrew M., *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia,* 2 Vols, London: Macmillan, 1920. Referred to as *ISP*. Smith was responsible for most of the text and photographs. On Smith and anthropology see Young, W.J., 'A Hostile Tribe Made Him Their Chief: Edwin W. Smith (1876-1957) and Anthropology', *Social Sciences and Missions* 26 (2013) 226-252.

[17] *ISP,* vol ii, 277.

[18] *ISP,* vol ii, 306-9.

life.[19] It laid a foundation for Smith's ever-increasing respect for Africans which he expressed in his literary work and in the societies mentioned below.

[b] As a theoretician with the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Smith's Bible Society career began in 1916 as the Society's Agent in Rome and evidenced his linguistic gift by preaching in Italian after a few months. There he faced, as others often do,[20] people who objected to a fresh Bible translation. Diodati's 1607 version was revered and many thought it as sacrilegious to change it as to modernise Italy's great poet, Dante. Smith explained that Dante wrote original pieces in Italian but Diodati's version was itself a translation from other languages so further versions were permissible and necessary.[21]

After returning to Britain in 1921 Smith's work was informed by his involvement in such organisations as the Royal African Society, the International African Institute which he helped to found and the Royal Anthropological Institute which made him President, 1933-35, the only missionary ever to be so honoured. Smith followed linguistic developments closely and in his wide ranging 1935 presidential address[22] outlined the latest thinking in understanding Bantu languages. Although it had rarely been attempted at the time he said 'we should look upon the grammar of an Ntu language from the Ntu point of view, instead of pressing it into the frame of Indo-European languages.'[23] Translation of thought and culture as well as languages often came into his vast literary output[24] and his mature missiology amounted to translating the Christian faith across cultures.[25]

Prior to that, as the Bible Society's Literary Superintendent from 1923-32[26] Smith produced Popular Annual Reports which always had a section on translation and showed that the subject had an important place in his thinking.

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[19] Lamin Sanneh argues for the positive contribution of some missionaries in affirming Africans in his *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture,* 1989, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989, revised and expanded edition 2009.

[20] On the New Xhosa Bible, 'On the whole the NXB, which was translated at a huge cost, has not yet succeeded in even approaching the popularity of the older version.', Punt Jeremy, Translating the Bible in South Africa: Challenges to Responsibility and Contextuality, in Brenner, Athalya and van Henten, Jan Willem, *Bible Translation on the Threshold, of the Twenty-First Century: Authority, Reception, Culture and Religion,* London, Sheffield Academic Press, 2002, p. 105

[21] Smith, Edwin W., La Bibbia in Italia, Conferenza Detta A Roma Presso L'Associazione 'Fides et Labor', ii 26 Giugno 1919, p. 15. 'Dante è opera originale, Diodati è traduzione della Sacre Scritture.'

[22] Africa, 'What do we know of it?' Presidential Address, Royal Anthropological Institute, 1935, *JRAI*, Vol. LXV, 1-81.

[23] Africa, What do we know of it?, p. 48. Ena Fowler shows how Smith and others of that generation used classical grammars as their patterns for understanding Bantu languages. This was not the best way of describing these languages. See Ena Fowler in Fowler, D.G., *A Dictionary of Ila Usage*, 1860-1960, International African Institute, Hamburg: LIT, 2000, 849-882 and in Fowler, Dennis G., *The Ila Speaking, Records of a Lost World, International African Institute,* Hamburg: LIT, 2002, 197-204. The latter title suggests that the Ila of today has changed from that of 100years ago.

[24] QWS has an extensive bibliography of Smith's work.

[25] See Young, W. John, 'Edwin Smith: Pioneer explorer in African Christian Theology', *Epworth Review*, 1993, 80-88.

[26] Roe, chapter 9, 225-56, covers the organisation of Bible House in the years between the two world wars.

In *The Bridge-Builders* (1923), he explained that the translator contends with idioms so native speakers are essential for translation and as Christians in new churches mature they will 'take their share in translating and perfecting the Scriptures in their mother-tongue.'[27] Indeed, *In The Mother Tongue,* 1930, he asserted that 'To express the dear and intimate things which are the very breath and substance of life a man will fall back on the tongue he learnt not at school, but in the house' so 'If you wish to reach his heart you will address him in that language.'[28] 75 years later Andrew Walls agreed, "The language you use to talk to your wife should be the language you use to pray to God, and the language you use to pray ought to be the language in which you do theology."[29] In his final Popular Annual Report, *The Impossible* (1932), Smith discussed obstacles to translation and although translators accepted such limitations they 'spare no pains to secure the utmost possible precision and beauty.'[30]

Smith drew his ideas on language acquisition and translation together in his important 1929 book, *The Shrine of a People's Soul*. Chapter 7, 'Breaking the Shell', was devoted to translation. He explained that although 'it does not rank among the highest of literary arts'[31] 'Translation is an important and essential art, but difficult and dangerous.'[32] Smith's 'ideal translator would be fully bilingual'[33] and, showing his anthropological hand, thoroughly conversant with 'the life of the people'.[34] This suggested that Bible translators needed to engage both with Biblical languages and cultures and those into which they translate the Bible. Smith showed how differences in languages and their capabilities make translation difficult, for example, in going from one which abounds in prepositions to another which has few if any. Nevertheless, 'If a perfect literary translation is unachievable, something less than perfect may serve a very useful purpose.'[35] Altogether, he argued that 'a good translation is practicable'[36] and fortunately 'Both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament are eminently translatable languages'.[37] Moreover, he contended that shades of meaning in Hebrew could be reproduced much better in Bantu languages than in English.

For Smith, a good Bible translation should be 'faithful to the original text; it must be intelligible to the reader for whom it is intended; and it must be beautiful in style'[38] He was

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[27] Smith, E.W., *The Bridge Builders*, London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1923, p 24.
[28] Smith, E.W., *In the Mother Tongue,* London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1930, 8.
[29] Hill, 86 quoting Andrew F.Walls, personal communication, November 8, 2005.
[30] Smith, E.W., *The Impossible,* London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1932, 88.
[31] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 137.
[32] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 138.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 139.
[35] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 147.
[36] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 151.
[37] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 148.
[38] Smith, E. W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 152. Smalley p 131 suggests that fidelity to the original languages and intelligibility and naturalness in the receptor language would be the best for producing "the most natural equivalent".

clear that fidelity to the original text required familiarity with its languages, 'a translation of a translation of a translation can never be satisfactory.'[39] Nevertheless, because languages vary in the way they arrange words to make sense 'The translator must emancipate himself from the bondage of a soulless literalism.'[40] Smith applauded those who translated into everyday speech, for example Luther who made 'the Bible really a German book, as Tyndale made it an English book'[41] and pointed out that the Chinese Bible could only be accessed by scholars but when translated 'into the vulgar tongue'[42] was widely read. Finally, he argued that beauty can be striven for by feeling deeply the truth of what is written.[43]

Inevitably there are problems and compromises. Smith anticipated the dynamic equivalence method adopted later by the Bible Societies and others as he declared 'We are to translate ideas rather than words.'[44] Although fidelity to the original was important Smith was particularly concerned that the recipients could understand their Bible. When it came to idioms and completely foreign concepts such as snow for dwellers on the Kafue flood plain, 'The translator has many an anxious moment in deciding how far it is allowable in the desire to produce an idiomatic, intelligible, beautiful version, to depart from strict literal accuracy'.[45] In that case Smith's solution was to use the local word (*lukobo*) for a flock of white cattle egrets to translate snow in Revelation 1:14. That solution remains in the latest version (2015) which fine tunes to 'little egret' (*kakobo*).

These ideas succinctly expressed what later Bible translation theorists would articulate in much greater detail. Also, Smith's overall view was that languages and cultures complement and enrich each other. He saw the Bible as 'not the book of one race but the book of humanity, and not until all mankind interprets it in the light of various racial genius will all its meaning be revealed'.[46] This was echoed by Andrew Walls, who at the end of the twentieth century said, 'the more Christ is translated into the various thought forms and life systems which form our various national identities, the richer all of us will be in our common Christian identity.'[47]

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[39] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 152.
[40] Smith, E. W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul* ,London: CMS, 1929, 156.
[41] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 154.
[42] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 154.
[43] Crisp, Simon, in Brenner and van Henten, eds., pp 44-47 works out if this can be attained by evaluating 'four English translations with pretensions to literary status'. Also, Linton, Calvin D., 'The Importance of Literary Style in Bible Translation Today', in Barker, Kenneth L., ed., *The Making of a Contemporary Translation: New International Version,* London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987, 19-43.
[44] Smith, E. W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 157.
[45] Smith, E.W., *The Shrine of a People's Soul,* London: CMS, 1929, 160.
[46] *Shrine,* 202.
[47] Walls, Andrew F., 'Culture and Conversion in Christian History' *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1996, 54.

During Smith's final Bible Society appointment, Editorial Superintendent (1933-39) in charge of translations, he signed off many new translations from Africa.[48] In the mid-1930s the Editorial Sub-Committee discussed translations to help new readers. Smith was attracted by the simplified versions of English developed by Ogden and Richards in the 1920s and 30s, and saw their usefulness for learners of English. He drafted translations of John 1-6 in Simplified and Basic English and in 1938 published the whole of John's gospel in Basic English which was set out in a convenient paragraph format.[49] He was involved in the Basic English Bible and the CUP edition (1949) followed his version of St John's gospel closely but in a less accessible verse by verse format. Smith's *African Beliefs and Christian Faith* (1936) which translated theology into an African context was also written in Basic English.[50]

[c] Tour of India.

In 1938-39 Smith visited India and Sri Lanka for the Bible Society to 'inquire and report … as to the necessity, advisability and feasibility of producing simplified versions for the benefit of adults learning to read'.[51] In six months he toured the sub-continent interviewing missionaries, Indian Christians and such eminent Indians as Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore.[52] Early on he met the veteran missionary, C.F. Andrews, who declared that the Bengali Bible was out of date. Andrews' friend Tagore, the poet, had said of it, 'that is not the Bengali we are reading and writing'.[53]

By 27 November 1938 Smith was in Allahabad (400 miles south east of Delhi) where he preached at the Cathedral and interviewed Pandit Nehru; 'Told him I had read his pamphlet on language and was interested that he supported Basic English. What was his idea of a Basic Hindustani? Told of a series of textbooks in Basic Hindustani.'[54] On the following day Smith interviewed Gandhi.

> I said ... "We of the Bible Society are deeply interested in the campaign against illiteracy and in those questions of language and script you are now discussing... we are told by many that the Hindi Bible is beyond the comprehension of simple people - we do not know what to do" G. "Yes it is so. I have read the Bible - I have a copy here - and the style is classical. But a translation of the Bible must be in classical." I demurred at this. [55]

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[48] Roe, James Moulton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905-1954,* London: BFBS, 1965, 391, shows 43/56 translations from Africa from 1933-37.

[49] Examples of his rendering of John 1-6 in two simplified systems are found in Smith Papers, Bible Society Archives, Cambridge (SPBSAC).

[50] See Young, W. John, 'Edwin Smith: Pioneer explorer in African Christian Theology', *Epworth Review*, 1993, 80-88.

[51] Report on the Visit of the Editorial Superintendent (Rev E. Smith) to India and Ceylon, 1938-9, (SPBSAC).

[52] Accounts of this tour are found in the above report and in his diary also in the same archive. This has full accounts of his interviews and travels.

[53] Smith Diary, 1938-9, vol. i, p. 76, SPBSAC.

[54] Smith Diary, 1938-9, vol. i, p. 140, SPBSAC.

[55] Smith Diary, 1938-9, vol. i, pp. 160, 161, SPBSAC.

They discussed dialects in England, hygiene, and various scripts but Gandhi had no suggestions about simplified translations.

Later Smith visited Andrews near Calcutta and was taken next door 'to pay respects to Tagore' who was like his photos, 'Seated at desk, in Indian costume, writing Bengali on slips of paper.'[56] They discussed the possibility of producing a modern Bengali Bible. Tagore, aged 77, said he was too old but would do 1 Corinthians 13 to show how it should be done but neither Tagore nor Andrews lived long enough to make any progress on this project.

Smith concluded that existing Indian versions needed revision and simplified versions were needed.[57] He noted that translators paid too much attention to the pundits who preferred ornate language, not the usage of ordinary people. Smith submitted his report just before the onset of World War 2 which 'necessitated the postponement of policies which only came to fruition 20 years later, long after Smith had retired. The importance of his study and recommendations has always been emphasised by his successors.'[58] Thus, if improved translations in the Indian sub-continent appeared in due course Smith had planted the seed for such projects many years earlier.

d. Later thinking.

Smith continued to think about Bible translation and during his five years in the USA expressed his views on training for this very specialist calling when he spoke to the Oriental Society of Hartford, Connecticut on 9 November, 1942.[59] He had reservations about the relatively new Summer Institute of Linguistics programme though he liked the emphasis on phonetics. Since then this organisation has 'established a strong place in linguistics unparalleled by any other missionary organisation in any secular discipline.'[60]

Smith expected suitable candidates for translation ministry to be competent in Greek and Hebrew and with conversational knowledge of a modern language other than English. He ruled out tone deaf people because of the tonal nature of many languages. [61] Since he saw linguistics as part of the general science of culture he repeated his view that the translator needs to be conversant with the social and psychological context of Biblical times and those of recipient peoples for 'words have no meaning apart from their context'.[62] Around the same

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[56] Smith Diary, 1938-9, vol. iii, p. 31, (SPBSAC).

[57] Report on the Visit of the Editorial Superintendent (Rev E. Smith) to India and Ceylon, 1938-9, 145-50, SPBSAC.

[58] Roe, James Moulton, *A History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905-1954,* London: BFBS, 1965, p. 367.

[59] 'A School for Translators', *IRM* 34, issue 3, July 1945, pp 243-252.

[60] Smalley, 1991, p. 75. Smalley gave a more detailed assessment of SIL.

[61] Smith, E.W., 'A School for Translators', *IRM* 34, issue 3, July 1945, pp 248.

[62] Smith, E.W., 'A School for Translators', *IRM* 34, issue 3, July 1945, pp 250. As Daniel Shaw in his article on 'Bible Translation' in Moreau, A. Scott (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Carlisle, Paternoster, 2000, that after Nida it was clear that 'studies of the social context and cultural activity are important to translators as they seek to communicate in a particular language and culture.' p 124. Smith had been well aware of this since 1909.

time he said, 'you have not mastered the rich, flexible, mellifluous African tongue until you can sit down and discuss things and gossip and joke with every and any individual of the tribe …'[63] He concluded by restating his view that 'All versions of Scripture made by foreigners are provisional'[64] and that translation will eventually 'fall entirely into the hands of native scholars.'[65] Things have in many ways turned out on the lines indicated by Smith in those days.

During his time as Editorial Superintendent he prepared a discussion paper on the name of God in Bible translations. Many versions used such transliterations as Jehova in the case of the Tetragrammaton. Indeed in *African Beliefs and Christian Faith* Smith referred to *Yahwe* in explaining Old Testament religion. However, by 1950 when he discussed the subject in his opening section for *African Ideas of God* (1950) he discussed names for God used in translations and argued for local names rather than transliterations, citing intra scripture use. Here he diverged from the AV of 1611 with Jehovah and would have disagreed with the Jerusalem Bible of 1966 which used *Yahweh* for the Tetragrammaton. Smith argued it was translated *kurios* in the Septuagint and that 'God' was a pagan word in the first place and 'Christianity took it and filled it with a new content.'[66] He expected that the same would happen with the many names of God around Africa.

[e] Evaluation.

Although the professional era in Bible translation began with Eugene Nida's arrival at the American Bible Society in 1943 Smith already saw the best way forward and Smalley accepts that he was a precursor of this era who

> 'drew together some of the wide experience which the British and Foreign Bible Society and others had gained in working with translators, his own experience, and his anthropological sense, to focus more fully on translation problems from the standpoint of the receptor language than some of the biblical scholars who preceded and followed him'[67]

Smith's profile in the USA was raised by his time at Hartford and Nashville and an American edition of his *Shrine of a People's Soul* was published in 1947 and reviewed in *The Bible Translator* of 1953 by Margaret Hills of New York who recognised the value of the 1929 work.

> 'One might almost call it a scholarly forecast of all the volumes of *The Bible Translator* yet published, written before this periodical was ever thought of. In

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[63] Smith, E.W., *Knowing the Africa,* London: Lutterworth, 1946, 43.
[64] Smith, E.W., 'A School for Translators', *IRM* 34, issue 3, July 1945, pp 252.
[65] Smith, E.W., 'A School for Translators', *IRM* 34, issue 3, July 1945, pp 252.
[66] Smith, E.W., ed., *African Ideas of God,* London: Edinburgh House Press, 1950, 35. See Walls, 'Translation Principle', 1996, 35
[67] Smalley, W.E., *Translation as Mission*, Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement, Macon University Press, Macon, Georgia, 1991, 67f.

those days the American Bible Society used to urge every translator to read this book.'[68]

Eugene A Nida, a major influence in the professional era of Bible translation after WW2, acknowledged Smith's influence and said, 'he had a keen interest in so many phases of communication. I had a great respect for his work, learned a great deal from him, and was amazed at the number of people in Africa whom I later met and who had been significantly influenced by Edwin Smith's writings and teaching.'[69]

Carried along by Nida and others translation theory and practice went much farther in the second half of the twentieth century. Smith's emphasis on readability and translation of ideas was carried through into common language versions. *The Good News Bible,* the fruit of American deliberations in this area, and set in the lower middle readability range [70] has been a trendsetter for common language versions in many other languages.[71]. New levels of technicality, understanding and production have transformed the field. The doctrine of incarnation is a strong impulse for relating to cultures/languages[72] so that the Bible appears in more and more languages and translation as a mission principle has been strongly present in the writings of WA Smalley who surveyed the history and development of the topic,[73] A. F. Walls who sees Christianity as infinitely translatable,[74] and Lamin Sanneh[75] who extolled the virtues of translation. Smith would have been very comfortable in the company of such scholars from the generations that followed him and I think they owe him a debt of gratitude.

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[68] *The Bible Translator*, 1953 vol. 4, issue 3, 142f.

[69] letter to author from Eugene A. Nida, 18 July 1994.

[70] As in the diagram in Wonderly, William L., 'Some Principles of "Common-Language" Translation', *The Bible Translator*, July 1970, p. 126, which locates it (as TEV) in the lower middle reading level and the NEB much higher. My small experiments confirm this with such versions as *The Message* and *The New Century Version* being extremely readable and *GNB* slightly more demanding and the *JB* and *REB* requiring a much higher reading ability, mainly on account of the longer sentence structure. *The Translators New Testament* (BFBS 1973) is pitched at a very easy reading level and follows Smith's principles.

[71] '*TWFTW* chose since its inception to follow the approach developed by Eugene Nida, and described by him as dynamic equivalent. The *Good News Translation*, also known as *Today's English Version,* is held to be a good example of a dynamic equivalent translation of the Bible.' **THE WORD FOR THE WORLD BIBLE TRANSLATORS: APPROACH TO TRANSLATION,** p.1, Véroni Krüger, August 2009. TWFTW went on to consider that 'Wendland's "literary functional equivalence" ("LiFE") approach to translation seems to be a logical development from functional equivalence.' p. 18. [downloaded 23 February 2016].

[72] Hill, Harriet, The Vernacular Treasure: A Century of Mother-Tongue Bible Translation, *IBMR,* Vol. 30, No.2, April 2006, 86. Also, Walls, Andrew F., 'The Translation Principle in Christian History', in *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith*, Edinburgh, T & T Clark, 1996, 26-42,

[73] Smalley, W.E., *Translation as Mission*, Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement, Macon University Press, Macon, Georgia, 1991.

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Smith did not cover the whole field to the modern level of detail but as in so many other areas (anthropology in Central Africa, applied anthropology, study of African religions and African Christian Theology) he saw the way ahead and made preliminary explorations.

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