

Contemporary Approaches to Bible Translation

Origins, Characteristics and Issues

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For most of the last half of the twentieth century the tendency was to think of Bible translations in terms of a binary opposition between literal or idiomatic, or, in other words, dynamic equivalence versus formal equivalence. Further academic discussion and, especially, the development of the whole academic field of translation studies has led to the problematizing of such a simple dichotomy and to much broader analyses of translation work and products including sociological, cultural, economic, rhetorical and ideological factors. In this essay we will first give an overview of developments in contemporary approaches to Bible translation around the world in the past few decades and then consider some recent translations of the Bible into the Portuguese language and how they relate to some of the themes and issues discussed in the first part of this essay.

In thinking through the way Bible translation has been done over the past several decades it will be helpful to think through the issues as they relate to key interrogative questions such as who, what, where, why and how. That is, who carries out the work (and where is it carried out), what is it that they translate, what purpose or function do the translators or their commissioners have in mind for the translation (summarized here with the “why” question) and how is the work carried out. The diverse issues raised by these questions should give us a fuller understanding of the work of Bible translation today. It will become apparent that, in many ways, the work of Bible translation today reflects many of the same practices and issues that have marked Bible translations for centuries.

Who Translates and Where Are the Decisions Made?

The methodology of contemporary translation work is impacted by a number of factors regarding the people involved in the work. The

key issues revolve around whether the work is being carried out or supervised by national leadership or by missionary personnel and whether the translation project is primarily the work of one or two people or of a more extended team. In the dominant languages of developed nations with strong Christian traditions most contemporary Bible translations are being carried out by teams of recognized scholars who carry out their work in the context of a denominational, confessional or ecumenical organization. In this scenario the work is usually divided up between the scholars according to their areas of expertise. Scholars specializing in certain books or literary genres of the Old or New Testament are given responsibility to provide the initial translations of particular books and those initial translations are reviewed by scholars who are given editorial responsibilities. Literary, stylistic and other types of consultants (or members of a review board) are also typically consulted. In theory the division of labor results in higher-quality and faster work, less likely to be marred by the idiosyncratic interpretations of any individual interpreters. Just as important, or perhaps more importantly, the involvement of a large team of scholars who are recognized by various Christian constituencies lends a heightened perception of credibility to the translation project as a whole and may be crucial to the financial success of the translation project. For any Bible translation to gain a significant level of acceptance and use within the community for which it was produced some strategy for gaining the confidence of that community is normally pursued. In situations where individual scholars or very small groups of scholars carry out the work of Bible translation the work may be expected to take longer and it may be marked by more creative or idiosyncratic interpretations or translations. The acceptability of such translations may be more dependent upon the reputation of the translator, the reputation of the publisher or sponsoring organization (if there is one) or the special characteristics or features of the Bible.

When Bible translation is carried out in missionary contexts or in the developing world, it has been common for missionaries or foreign agencies to play the leading role in the work, bringing in their own expertise but also sometimes marginalizing the local community and minimizing the essential contributions of their mother-tongue collaborators.¹ Until recently it was often assumed without question that the

¹ Dieudonné Prosper Aroga Bessong and Michael Kenmogne, "Bible Translation in Africa" in Philip A. Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation* (Rome: Edizioni de storia e letteratura, 2007), 355-9.

foreign experts and their sponsoring agencies were the only people in a position to make the key decisions about all of the issues we will address in this essay: what will be translated, who will carry out the work, the purpose for the translation and the way in which the work would be carried out. Traditionally, western missionaries have been credited as the translators in these situations and those who actually spoke the language into which the Bible was being translated were merely referred to as “language helpers” or “informants.”² In these situations external constituencies determine how funding will be used and the Bible translation produced is usually understood to serve as an evangelistic tool and key to the establishment of Christianity within the community and the material translated (often starting with one of the Gospels), the choice of the “language helpers” and the philosophy of the translation are usually determined by the evangelistic priorities of the missionaries and their sponsoring agency rather than by the felt-needs, desires or priorities of the local community.

More recently there has been growing awareness of the patronizing message that is sent through such approaches and key agencies are now more determined to let local potential users and local leadership play a leading rather than a subordinate role in the decision-making processes and have come to recognize the primary role of “mother-tongue translators” and the fact that it is actually those who do not speak the language as their mother tongue who are playing the helping or supporting role.³ The marginalization or full involvement of the local community and its leadership is the key decision-making process is now understood to be an ethical issue that cannot be ignored, least of all by people who understand themselves to be advancing a Christ-centered message and agenda.

What Gets Translated?

One of the first things to be determined by any person or group initiating a new Bible translation project is to decide (if it is not assumed from the very beginning) what exactly they will be translating, or, at least, what they will translate first. Traditionally, the New Testament or Scripture portions have tended to be translated first. More recently

² Paul Ellingworth, “Translation Techniques in Modern Bible Translations” in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 323-5.

³ Lynell Zogbo, “Introduction: The Field Today” in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 345.

those translating in missionary contexts have grown in their recognition of the difficulty or impossibility of understanding the New Testament apart from familiarity with the Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible) and in their awareness that people in some cultures sense a much more natural connection with the cultural context of the Old Testament than they do the New.

In missionary contexts translations into minority languages have often been based on highly regarded translations in a more dominant regional language (e.g., Portuguese, Spanish, French, English, etc.).⁴ When a translation in one language is used as the base text for a translation into another language it is usually a very literal (or formal equivalent) translation that is considered the standard translation by the Christian community preparing the translation. At times more idiomatic translations have been used as the base text for a new translation. As more and more mother-tongue translators are receiving training in the biblical languages, and ideological and other questions are raised about the practice of translating from translations, the tendency has been to give priority to the translation of texts from the original languages.⁵ In more developed countries translations are usually based on Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic texts, although other translations are always consulted as well.⁶ In all contexts it is not unusual for one or more previous translations to serve as the model for the kind of translation approach to be adopted for the new translation.

While most translation teams work from the eclectic texts published by the German or United Bible Societies (the *BHS* or *BHQ* and *NA*²⁷ or *UBS*⁴),⁷ some groups (including the Eastern Orthodox Church) prefer to translate the Byzantine Majority Text and others follow the textual basis reflected in traditional translations which have attained a revered status in their community (i.e., the *KJV* and its cultural

⁴ See Edesio Sánchez-Cetina, "Word of God, Word of the People: Translating the Bible in Post-Missionary Times" in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 394-5; Bessong and Kenmogne, "Bible Translation in Africa," 375.

⁵ Bessong and Kenmogne, "Bible Translation in Africa," 375-6.

⁶ Even the King James Version (or Authorized Version) of 1611 was based largely on The Bishop's Bible and made use of other early English translations, including Wycliffe's translation. Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 76.

⁷ Karl Elliger and Wilhelm Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1987); *Biblia Hebraica Quinta*, being published in fascicles by the German Bible Society in Stuttgart; Kurt Aland et al, *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th edition; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993); Kurt Aland et al, *The Greek New Testament* (4th edition; Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1993).

equivalents). Translations produced primarily for Protestant churches do not normally include the Old Testament Apocrypha (or deuterocanonical books), while those produced for Roman Catholic or interconfessional audiences include them.

Since the Eastern Orthodox Church considers the Septuagint (LXX) its canonical text, translations prepared by or for that community will usually be based on that ancient Greek text (with deuterocanonical books included). An interconfessional translation may be prepared and then published in more than one format. The books included and the order and location of their placement would differ in “Protestant,” “Interconfessional” and “Catholic” editions.⁸

Besides establishing the base text, translators must decide the form to be taken by the translation and what materials, if any, will accompany the translation. Until recently Bible translations have virtually always been presented in written form but now they are often prepared for use in other media, whether audio, video, animation, graphic literature, oral, dramatic or musical presentation, sign language, etc. Each potential medium raises different questions and places different requirements on the translator(s).

In the case of published written copies of a translation, the translator(s) or their sponsoring/commissioning organization need to decide how the translation is to be presented and whether or not it is to be accompanied by such things as an introduction to the work as a whole (or a series of introductory articles), introductions to individual books of the Bible, section/paragraph headings, textual notes, interpretive notes, appendices, maps, charts, pictures, cross-references, a glossary, concise concordance or other materials. Of course, such many such materials could be translated or adapted from other works, or they could be created from scratch. A wide range of possible approaches includes the presentation of little more than the translation of the main text, or the common inclusion of some occasional footnotes highlighting textual difficulties and/or alternative translations, or the inclusion of a full set of commentary-like notes, articles and study helps. One of the decisions faced by translators (see below on domestication versus foreignization) is the extent to which the translation will reflect linguistic, cultural and other realities that are foreign to the intended readers. The greater the extent to which the readers will be exposed in the trans-

⁸ The UBS Background Paper, “Scripture Translation and the Churches,” points out that “It is important to distinguish between confessional and interconfessional translations and between confessional and interconfessional editions. The text may be interconfessional while the edition is confessional” (6).

lation to things or ideas that are foreign to them the greater the felt need may be for more extensive notes, glossaries and/or other introductory materials.

Sánchez-Cetina argues that ‘Study Bibles’ are especially important in “post-missionary” translation work:

“‘Post-missionary’ translation of the Bible must take into account the indisputable fact that translating Biblical content requires a ‘translation’ of the various contexts that are essential to a fuller understanding of the text. This need has led Bible translating organizations to consider the development of Study Bibles, that is, versions of the Bible that include various ‘reader’s aids’ such as introductions to books and major sections; footnotes highlighting historical, social, cultural, religious, archaeological, and geographical aspects; insets, maps, glossaries, as well as thematic indexes. The purpose of these aids is to ‘locate’ the reader within the text’s context. The object is not to tell the reader what he or she must believe, but to provide tools and information so that the reader is better prepared to decide for him- or herself what the text means.”⁹

He emphasizes that Study Bibles developed in keeping with United Bible Societies (UBS) guidelines “do not include doctrinal, homiletic, devotional, or confessional-type notes or remarks.”¹⁰ Of course, most Study Bibles are not developed in light of UBS guidelines (and one may question whether modern [and Western] academic cultural values are transmitted by the exclusion of doctrinal, homiletic, devotional, or confessional material [even in Bibles prepared for churches!] and the inclusion of seemingly neutral and objective historical-critical kinds of notes).

The field of translation studies has given serious attention to the way in which paratextual materials – everything from the title, design of the front cover, comments on the back cover, preface, introduction, etc. – guide readers to adopt particular attitudes or approaches to reading any given translation.¹¹ In the case of Bible translations this would include titles equivalent to “Holy Bible” (or “Word of God”) as well as the recognition of a respected religious or cultural publisher, the possible presence of the Catholic imprimatur or other endorsements from religious leaders. It would most certainly include the na-

⁹ Edesio Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People: Translating the Bible in Post-Missionary Times” in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 407.

¹⁰ Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 407.

¹¹ See, e.g., Theo Hermans, “Irony’s Echo” in *The Conference of the Tongues* (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome, 2007).

ture and contents of “reader’s aids” or any other materials that would guide the reader in particular ways of relating to and understanding the translation.

While many Study Bibles do focus on providing background information that is important for understanding the texts in their original contexts (whether from a more critical or a more traditional perspective),¹² many are clearly intended to help or encourage people to read the Bible in terms of a particular theological, devotional or confessional perspective.¹³ The list of Portuguese language study Bibles (mainly published in Brazil) is astounding. It includes *A Bíblia de Estudo da Mulher*, *Bíblia de Estudo Dake*, *Bíblia de Estudo de Genebra Edição Ampliada*, *Bíblia de Estudo do Líder Pentecostal*, *Bíblia de Estudo Pentecostal*, *Bíblia de Estudo Scofield*, *A Bíblia da Mulher*, *A Bíblia da Mulher que Ora NVI*, *A Bíblia do Pregador*, *Bíblia Anotada Expandida*, *Bíblia Apologética de Estudo*, *Bíblia da Adolescente Aplicação Pessoal*, *Bíblia da Família*, *Bíblia da Liderança Cristã*, *Bíblia de Estudo Almeida*, *Bíblia de Estudo Batalha Espiritual e Vitória Financeira*, *Bíblia de Estudo da Mulher*, *Bíblia de Estudo de Aplicação Pessoal*, *Bíblia de Estudo de Avivamento e Renovação Espiritual*, *Bíblia de Estudo Despertar*, *Bíblia de Estudo Devocional Max Lucado*, *Bíblia de Estudo do Evangelista*, *Bíblia de Estudo Esperança*, *Bíblia de Estudo NVI*, *Bíblia de Estudo Pentecostal*, *Bíblia de Estudo Plenitude*, *Bíblia de Estudo Plenitude para Jovens*, *Bíblia de Recursos para o Ministério com Crianças*, *Bíblia do Adolescente Aplicação Pessoal*, *Bíblia do Adorador*, *Bíblia Faithgirlz – A Bíblia das Garotas de Fé*, *Bíblia NVI do Ministro*, *Bíblia NVI Evangelismo em Ação*, *Bíblia Shedd*, *Bíblia Thompson Luxo*, *Bíblia do Homem*, *Bíblia Devocional da Mulher NVI*, and the *Bíblia NVI do Executivo*. Most of these are translations and adaptations of study Bibles that were originally published for one sector or another of the American evangelical market.¹⁴

Are book introductions prepared or translated from a pre-existing source? Are section headings prepared anew or translated or adapted

¹² E.g., *The New Oxford Annotated Study Bible*, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, *The NIV Study Bible*, or *The ESV Study Bible*.

¹³ One of the most popular modern study Bibles of the twentieth century was the dispensational *Scofield Reference Bible* (edited Cyrus I. Scofield and published by Oxford University Press in 1909; revised edition, 1917). There are many anecdotes to the effect that many of its readers never distinguished between the authority of the main text and the authority of the notes, treating the latter as if they carried divine authority!

¹⁴ In English language we have the *Women’s Study Bible*, the *Green Study Bible*, dispensational study Bibles (e.g., the *Scofield Reference Bible*, *Ryrie Study Bible*), Pentecostal Study Bibles (e.g., *New Spirit Filled Life Bible*), Reformed study Bibles (e.g., *Geneva Study Bible*), *The Apologetics Study Bible*, a *Lutheran Study Bible*, an *Orthodox Study Bible*, the *Catholic Study Bible*, and numerous historically oriented study Bibles reflecting a variety of positions on critical issues.

from prior translations for from translators' helps? Translators may employ or neglect the use of footnotes, either acknowledging or marginalizing alternative interpretations and translation options.

Another facet of the question, "What gets translated?" is the issue of the relationship between form and meaning. That is, translators need to decide if they will concentrate solely on the meanings of words and sentences, or if they will also try to translate literary forms and genres and things such as poetic form, assonance, acrostic or other literary features. This part of the question will be addressed below, under the question, "How Is the Translation Work Being Carried Out?"

Why Is the Translation Being Prepared?

One of the key issues that determines the approach or method of translation that will be adopted is the question of the intended purpose or function of the translation.¹⁵ Some translations are intended for liturgical reading in churches. Some are intended for personal devotional use. Some have more academic study in mind. A translation might be intended (among other things) to highlight the voices and presence of people in the margins (or at least to be careful not to let them be marginalized due to cultural myopia or neglect). Many translations are prepared with a view to promoting Christian evangelistic or missionary work. Other translations may be primarily intended for historical or literary study or to be used in children's literature or materials prepared for people with limited reading abilities.¹⁶ So far we have focused on functions or purposes of written translations, but biblical texts are also translated with a view to being used in storytelling, dramatic, video or audio formats. *Skopostheorie*¹⁷ argues that the

¹⁵ "Ultimately, all translations serve specific cultural and historical goals and it is these goals that determine which translation techniques are applied and how they are applied in translations" (Lourens de Vries, "Introduction: Methodology of Bible Translation" in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 276).

¹⁶ The UBS document "What Should Bible Societies Publish?" (1992) referred to liturgical, literary and "bridge" translations as well as special translations for new readers, youth and others, showing special concern for the different varieties of readers whose needs should be served.

¹⁷ From the Greek, σκοπός (*skopos*), meaning 'goal' or 'target.' For the theory, see Hans J. Vermeer and Katharina Reif, *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984; cf. Hans J. Vermeer, *Esboço de uma Teoria da Tradução* [Porto, Edições Asa, 1986]), Christiane Nord, *Translating as Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome, 1997), and idem, "Scopos, Loyalty, and Translational Conventions," *Target* 3/1 (1991), 91-109.

intended function of any translation will and should be a determining factor in the translation approach adopted. The register adopted and vocabulary used, the rigidity or freedom in the translation of key terms, the preservation, omission or transformation of idiomatic expressions in the original text and the extent to which idiomatic expressions from the receptor language are introduced, the preservation or transformation of literary forms and genres, modification of names of people or places, and much more will be decided in light of the intended audience and function of the translation. In fact, *Skopostheorie* argues that a translation is to be evaluated primarily on the basis of whether or not it satisfies purposes of the intended readers and allows them to do with the translation what they wished.

Translation into a new or different medium usually places new demands on the translator,¹⁸ although some languages may make some similar demands. For example, some languages may require speakers to express themselves in ways that include information not included in the original text (e.g., are the people being addressed of the same or different social standing, or does the speaker share a close personal relationship with the person being addressed or are they strangers or merely acquaintances?).

In the case of the first written translations which are intended to be used by the majority of any particular community that will receive them, the decision regarding the most desirable type of translation is not made in isolation but in light of what they already have available. Communities that have a more traditional rather literal translation often appreciate having it complemented by a “common language” translation¹⁹ which is more easily accessible. Communities that only have such a common language translation may eventually want one that is more deemed more appropriate for certain other kinds of purposes. If we accept and remember that each translation is prepared with certain primary functions or purposes in mind it will seem obvious that other translations will eventually be desired that might be

¹⁸ See Paul A. Soukup and Robert Hodgson, eds., *From One Medium to Another: Basic Issues for Communicating the Scriptures in New Media* (Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997), Robert Koops, “When Moses Meets Dilbert: Similarity and Difference in Print, Audio, and Comic-strip Versions of the Bible” in Stefano Arduini and Robert Hodgson Jr., eds., *Similarity and Difference in Translation: Proceedings of the International Conference on Similarity and Translation : Bible House, New York City, May 31-June 1, 2001* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), 169-99.

¹⁹ “Common language” is a technical expression used to refer to “that part of the total resources of a given language common to the usage of both educated and uneducated” (William L. Wonderly, *Bible Translations for Popular Use* [London: United Bible Societies, 1968], 3, compare the UBS Background Paper, “Scripture Translation and the Churches”, 3 footnote 5).

more effective in serving other purposes and intentions. The United Bible Societies have affirmed the benefit of providing communities with more than one type of translation:

“Where possible and appropriate there should be at least two versions, a liturgical text and a common language translation. The liturgical text should respond to the requirements of church liturgy and of theological discourse within the context of church tradition. This may be a traditional text, a revision of an older church translation, or a new translation, depending on the requirements of the Church. It may be published as a lectionary for lectionary readings or as a complete Bible. The common language translation should be based on the principles of translation as communication of message. It should be in the style of language that is common and contemporary. It will normally be a new translation and should be a complete New Testament or Bible, depending on the requirements of the Church.”²⁰

How Is the Translation Work Being Carried Out?

Eugene Nida and Dynamic Equivalent or Common-Language Translations

Until the middle of the twentieth century most translations were of a very literal and even archaic type. Starting in the middle of the twentieth century Eugene A Nida of the American Bible Society began to lead the way²¹ towards the establishment of a second common type of Bible translation, referred to as a “dynamic equivalent” and then later, a “functional equivalent” type of translation. This second type is sometimes referred to as a “thought-for-thought” translation²² rather than the traditional “word-for-word” translation.²³

²⁰ “UBS Guidelines for Scripture Translation” (UBS Global Board, Reading, United Kingdom, April 2004), 3.

²¹ First with his *Bible Translating: An Analysis of Principles and Procedures* (New York: American Bible Society, 1947), followed by his *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964) and then, Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974).

²² This is sometimes called “meaning-based translation.” See Mildred L. Larson, *Meaning-Based Translation: A Guide to Cross-Language Equivalence* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America and Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1998).

²³ The quotation marks are necessary since no translation is truly word-for-word, but the traditional approach to Bible translation tended to try to come as close to that standard as possible.

Nida and Taber refer to the more literal type of translation as one marked by “formal correspondence,”²⁴ and their dislike of that approach is clearly reflected in their description of it. They describe formal correspondence as a “quality of a translation in which the features of the form of the source text have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language. Typically, formal correspondence distorts the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language and hence distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labor unduly hard.”²⁵

On the other hand, Nida and Taber describe “dynamic equivalence” as follows:

“[A] quality of a translation in which the language of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors. Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful.”²⁶

While many translations that might be called “dynamic equivalents” are based on an informal and often merely intuitive approach to representing what is understood to be the meaning of the text in words and structures that are native to the receiving language (as suggested by the expression “thought-for-thought”) the language used in the description given by Nida and Taber closely follows the more formal and complicated method that they describe. Three key expressions reflect the three steps that they outline: “back transformation,” “transfer” and “transformation in the receptor language.”

“Back transformation” refers to the transformation of the original text’s surface structure to a series of simple propositions or sentence

²⁴ For a discussion of the two types of translation in Portuguese, see A. Augusto Tavares, “Versões Bíblicas: Equivalência Formal ou Equivalência Dinâmica?,” *Revista Brotéria* 112.2 (1981), 183-95. The distinguishing of two types of translations goes back at least to Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1813 (who distinguished between ‘foreignizing’ and ‘domesticating’ types). In the first century B.C. (or B.C.E.) Cicero distinguished between the translation strategies to be employed with three different genres: rhetoric, poetry and science/philosophy (see Lourens de Vries, “Introduction: Methodology of Bible Translation” in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 271-2).

²⁵ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 201.

²⁶ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 200. By “response” Nida and Taber mean “the sum of the reactions of a receptor to a message in terms of understanding (or lack of it), emotional attitude, decision and action” (206).

kernels and the relationships between them (building off an understanding of language that is similar and indebted to the “deep structure” of Noam Chomsky’s Transformational Grammar).²⁷ In this method verbal nouns, since they represent events, are transformed into propositions so that a reference to divine adoption is transformed into the kernel or proposition, “God makes us his children” and this proposition is related to the others in its context.

“Transfer” refers to the reproduction into the receptor language of the original message as discerned by way of the back transformation (essentially the analysis of the text’s deep structure). That is, the propositions or sentence kernels are translated into the receptor language with a variety of “semantic adjustments” made in the process to account for special difficulties with idiomatic, pleonastic, formulaic, and figurative expressions, and to provide “contextual conditioning”²⁸ where it is felt to be needed. Various kinds of structural adjustments are also made at the discourse, sentence and word levels.²⁹

“Transformation in the receptor language” entails a “grammatical process by which kernels are restructured into a surface structure of appropriate style”³⁰ and “the raw results of the transfer process” are adapted to “a stylistic form appropriate to the receptor language and to the intended receptors.”³¹

Once a draft of a translation is ready it needs to be tested in a variety of ways with people who are appropriate representatives of the intended readership. Nida provides a variety of practical tests one may use to discern whether or not the intended readers find the translation to be clear and natural and to discover whether or not their understanding is what was intended by the translators.³² Translators have learned that this step may be skipped only to the peril of the entire translation project. Translators are always prone to think their translation is clearer and more acceptable than it actually is. Numerous improvements are made once one sees where readers lack understanding of the translation as it is. Of course the revisions need to be tested out as well.

²⁷ Cf. Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (Janua linguarum, 4; ‘s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1957), idem, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969).

²⁸ I.e., providing clarification that would not have been needed by the original readers but will be needed by the readers in order to keep the text from being misunderstood, meaningless, or “so ‘overloaded’ that it will constitute too much of a problem for the average reader to figure it out” (Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 110).

²⁹ See Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 105-119.

³⁰ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 208.

³¹ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 206.

³² Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 168-73.

The United Bible Societies have published a series of Handbooks – commentaries on the books of the Bible which pay special attention to the issues faced by translators dealing with languages and cultures that are very different from the ones reflected in the original texts and that provide suggestions for possible ways of dealing with the issues that Nida and Taber refer to as transfer and transformation.³³

SIL International (formerly the Summer Institute of Linguistics) has developed a series of commentaries called Semantic and Structural Analyses³⁴ in which the authors break up whole epistles into individual propositions (or kernels) attempt to discern how the book divides up into various sections and units and then provide diagrams which indicate the author's understanding of how each proposition (and then each group of propositions and each section of the book) is related to the others, ultimately providing a map of the flow of thought for the letter as a whole. The original idea was that translators could use these commentaries in order to understand the deep structure of each letter (at the level of the propositions and the relationships between them) and then seek to reproduce that structure in the surface structure of the receptor language.³⁵

Nida and Taber argue (in keeping with Chomsky's transformational grammar) that the meaning may be salvaged without clinging to the form in which it was communicated:

“In transferring the message from one language to another, it is the content which must be preserved at any cost; the form, except in special cases, such as poetry, is largely secondary, since within each language the rules for relating content to form are highly complex, arbitrary, and variable.”³⁶

³³ E.g., Robert G. Bratcher and Howard Hatton, *A Handbook on Deuteronomy* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 2000) and Howard Hatton, and Paul Ellingworth, *A Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* (UBS Handbook Series; New York: United Bible Societies, 1995).

³⁴ See John Beekman, John Callow, and Michael Kopeseć, *The Semantic Structure of Written Communication* (Dallas, Tex.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1981) and the various volumes that apply the method to whole books of the New Testament (e.g., John E. Banker, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of Philippians* (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 1996), John Callow, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of Colossians* (Second edition; Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2002), and Ellis W. Deibler, *A Semantic and Structural Analysis of Romans* (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 1998).

³⁵ See John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 267-8 (cf. Beekman and Callow, *A Arte de Interpretar e Comunicar a Palavra Escrita: Técnicas de Tradução da Bíblia* [São Paulo: Sociedade Religiosa Edições Vida Nova, 1992]).

³⁶ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 105.

Nida's dynamic equivalent approach was and is felt to be liberating.³⁷ He "burst upon a scene dominated by rigidly fixed expectations and smashed them."³⁸ Robinson suggested it was subversive "in the sense that he set out to dethrone the popularity of Bible versions which made little sense to the ordinary person."³⁹ Or, again, "[h]is subversive act consisted in opening the word to new audiences as well as to some in the old and familiar audience, in empowering new groups to have direct access to the Scriptures without mediation from the religious elite, the clergy, theologians or the biblical scholar."⁴⁰

In terms of the purposes for which the Bible societies were preparing their translations, typically to support the churches in their commitment to the spread of Christianity, these translations seemed to be more effective in engaging their readers directly and personally and giving them the sense that they speak directly to them. They seemed to more effectively advance Nida's goal, which was "the effective communication of the Good News about Jesus Christ across all kinds of cultural and linguistic barriers."⁴¹

Dynamic equivalent translations met with some resistance in places and among peoples that were familiar with Scripture in more traditional (and literal) versions and that had difficulty accepting that these more informal and easily understood texts could carry the same authority as the one(s) they had always known before. Mojola and Wendland suggest that with time these "new translations ... created a new orthodoxy and standard, to be imitated and reproduced everywhere."⁴²

Since the publication of *The Theory and Practice of Translation* there have been very significant developments in thinking about translation, due in part to significant developments within linguistics and especially due to the development of the young new field known as "trans-

³⁷ For a brief but more recent explanation of Nida's current thinking see Eugene A. Nida, "Bible Translation" in Mona Baker, ed., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 22-8.

³⁸ D. Robinson, *The Translator's Turn* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 225.

³⁹ Aloo Osotsi Mojola and Ernst Wendland, "Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies" in *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference* (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome, 2003), 4, reflecting on D. Robinson, *The Translator's Turn*, 225).

⁴⁰ Mojola and Wendland, "Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies," 5.

⁴¹ E. North, "Eugene A. Nida: An Appreciation" in *On Language, Culture and Religion: In Honor of Eugene A. Nida* (edited by M. Black and W. Smalley; The Hague: Mouton, 1974), cited in Mojola and Wendland, "Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies," 4. The UBS paper "Scripture Translation and the Churches" indicates that with dynamic equivalent or meaning-based translations "The focus is on the communication of the Good News" (2).

⁴² Mojola and Wendland, "Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies," 5.

lation studies"⁴³ and its growing influence within the United Bible Societies and other Bible translation agencies.⁴⁴

Doubts about the Distinction between Form and Content

On the linguistic front, the idea that form and content can be clearly distinguished has suffered from intense criticism as linguists have concluded that it is not feasible to posit a strict separation between syntax and semantics. Newer approaches doubt that meaning can be separated from surface structure or that all surface structures can be reduced to more universal deep structures. We have also seen the development of a number of newer linguistic fields and theories which undermine a view of communication that sees language as a matter of encoding and decoding messages through language.

Cognitive linguistics and the sub-field of frame semantics have argued that understanding of words and concepts is not as simple as knowing definitions and some basic information about any particular concept, but involves experiential awareness of how any given concept relates, in a given culture and linguistic context, to innumerable other concepts in patterns and relationships described as 'frames,' 'schemata' (or 'schemas'), 'scripts,' and/or 'mental models.'⁴⁵ This suggests that the understanding of a sentence such as "you were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23) requires much more than the understanding of the words in the sentence, and may require understanding a whole 'schema' or 'script' that would be familiar to the original readers but

⁴³ Translation studies is an interdisciplinary academic field attending to all aspects of the phenomenon of translation including, but not limited to, literary translation and interpreting services. There are numerous university departments and centers as well as academic societies dedicated to this area around the world (in some universities this work is carried out in the context of a department of comparative literature). To a certain extent, some developments within this field have intersected with developments in the thinking of scholars within the United Bible Societies and other Bible translation agencies.

⁴⁴ For a narrative survey of how thinking about Bible translation has developed within the United Bible Societies since Nida, see Stephen Pattemore, "Framing Nida: The Relevance of Translation Theory in the United Bible Societies" in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 218-63.

⁴⁵ Timothy Wilt, "Translation and Communication" in Wilt, ed., *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference*, 43-44. For a full explanation of cognitive linguistics see, e.g., Dirk Geeraerts and H. Cuyckens, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). For a very practical and up-to-date approach to considering various "frames of reference" in the work of Bible translation (including cognitive, sociocultural, organizational, situational, textual and lexical frames) see Ernst Wendland, *Contextual Frames of Reference in Translation: A Coursebook for Bible Translators and Teachers* (Manchester, UK, and Kinderhook, NY: St. Jerome, 2008).

not to the readers of any given translation. They may have their own 'scripts' or 'schemas' related to buying and selling and all that is involved (perhaps also for the buying and selling of people, but perhaps not) but they would not be the same as the one which the text assumes. Translators are challenged by the fact that they cannot explicate all of the frames, schemata and scripts with which the reader is expected to be familiar, and yet they hope that their readers will understand their translation.

Relevance Theory

Related to the challenges raised by cognitive linguistics and other linguistic developments are those which are highlighted by "relevance theory,"⁴⁶ which has been proposed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson and applied to translation theory by Ernst-August Gutt.⁴⁷ Relevance theory argues that human communication does not take place through a strict process of coding and decoding of meanings by use of language but is largely dependent upon the human "ability to draw inferences from people's behavior." Language is a form of human behavior that allows for relatively more explicit inferences to be made, but the general principle that communication takes place through inference remains the same.

According to relevance theory, an individual infers the meaning of a person's speech and/or other behavior based on information found in their "total cognitive environment" which is "is the set of all the facts that he can perceive or infer: all the facts that are manifest to him. An individual's total cognitive environment is a function of his physical environment and his cognitive abilities."⁴⁸ Communication works on the basis of the "principle of relevance," namely, that "every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance."⁴⁹ That is, people observe the speech and actions of those communicating with them and infer their meaning on the assumption that the message is relevant to them and their context.

⁴⁶ See Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995; idem, "Relevance Theory" in Laurence R. Horn and Gregory L. Ward, eds., *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2004), 607-632; idem, "Teoria da Relevância" in *Linguagem em (Dis)curso* 5 (2005), 221-268.

⁴⁷ See Ernst-August Gutt, *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation* (Dallas, Tex: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992), and idem, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* (Manchester, U.K.: St. Jerome, 2000).

⁴⁸ Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 39.

⁴⁹ Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 158, cited in Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 32.

For a person to interpret a statement or a text in the same way that the original listener or reader was expected to interpret it they would need to share the same cognitive environment as the original listener or reader. Since readers of translations (especially readers of translations of ancient literature) naturally do not share the same cognitive environment as the original texts, it becomes quite difficult to see how they will interpret a translation in the same way that the original text was expected to be interpreted.

One approach is to explicate in the translation information that is understood to be implicit in the original communication situation but that would not be implicit for the reader of the translation.⁵⁰ Gutt argues, however, that the multiplying of explications within the translation itself cannot be counted on to lead the readers to the same implicatures as suggested to the original readers. In fact, he suggests that one of the problems with the explications given in common language versions is that they often provide a meaning that is more determinate and closed than is actually appropriate given the “indeterminacy and open-endedness of implicature.”⁵¹ The solution may also overlook the fact that problems in interpretation come not only from a failure to recognize implicit information from the original communication situation, but also from interference caused by inferences drawn by the readers of the translation from their own cognitive environment which are not easily canceled out.⁵² The translation may also end up being filled with what will amount to an unacceptably high level of information processing that does not seem relevant to the reader of the translation, resulting in its disuse.⁵³

Gutt uses the analogy of direct and indirect quotation to suggest that we think in terms of two kinds of translation: direct translation and indirect translation. Just as a direct quotation attempts to preserve exactly what the other person said, direct translation seeks to attain complete interpretive resemblance. That is, with direct translation the translator works on the assumption that the readers have access to the same cognitive environment as the original listeners/readers and will make the same inferences that they would, if the translation includes all of the same communicative clues found in the original text. In the

⁵⁰ See Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 37-39, 57-61, L. Ronald Ross, “Advances in Linguistic Theory” in Wilt, ed., *Bible Translation*, 137-8, and the detailed discussion of this issue in Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 83-98.

⁵¹ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 92.

⁵² See Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 94-95.

⁵³ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 96-97.

case of a direct translation the translator's task is to ensure that the translation would convey "all and only those explicatures and implicatures that the original text was intended to convey"⁵⁴ if its readers shared the same cognitive environment as the original readers. Clearly such an approach has its advantages for the translator:

"For the translator, one of the important consequences of [carrying out a direct translation] is that it makes the explication of implicatures both unnecessary and undesirable. It makes it unnecessary because the reason for such explication was mismatches in contextual information in the cognitive environment of the receptors. Since in direct translation it is the audience's responsibility to make up for such differences, the translator need not be concerned with them. It also makes such explication undesirable because it would be likely to have a distorting influence on the intended interpretation."⁵⁵

Bible translators choosing to follow such a translation strategy would be laying a significant burden upon the receptors of the translation, one that could only be partially mitigated by providing them (or having someone else provide them) with notes, commentaries and other materials seeking to provide as much information as possible about the cognitive environment of the original texts.

Gutt describes indirect translation on the analogy of indirect quotations, which are reworded (and typically marked as reworded) in such a way that they only partially resemble the original discourse, retaining only those parts of the discourse or its meaning that are relevant to those to whom the indirect quotation is transmitted. In the same way, indirect translation is translation which does not aspire to complete interpretive resemblance with the original, but only to partial resemblance, with alterations made in order to adapt the text in ways that optimize its relevance for the receptors.

Just as indirect quotations may either modify the original statement only slightly or may transform it significantly, so also indirect translation may make only slight accommodations for the sake of the intended receptors, or it may make more significant accommodations for the sake of relevant communication with the receptors. In any case, it is expected that indirect translation, like indirect quotation, resembles the original "closely enough in relevant respects."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 99.

⁵⁵ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 175.

⁵⁶ Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 137, cited in Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 191.

Gutt suggests that some of the negative reactions that common language (or dynamic equivalent) translations have received may be due to unmet expectations with respect to the qualities the receptors expect in the translations provided to them. If they are familiar with more literal translations and are provided with a common language translation that seems to make the texts wordier and has the biblical authors expressing themselves less concisely or more pedantically than in the translations with which they have been familiar they may well feel that some tampering has taken place that has introduced material into the text that was not originally there.

Part of the solution may be found in the parallel with direct and indirect quotations in that they may be linguistically marked as such. That is, translators should be very clear to their readers about what kind of translation they have prepared and about what kinds of transformations or accommodations have or have not been introduced into the text and why that strategy has been adopted. "Thus the practice of translators to explain their 'translation principles' in a foreword makes good sense in our relevance-theoretic framework and could probably be used more widely to make translations successful."⁵⁷ Gutt also stresses that "The importance of ensuring that the intended resemblance be known to both parties, and the danger of relying on tacit assumptions in this matter, can hardly be overemphasized" since "insufficient awareness in this area has contributed greatly to the misunderstandings, unjustified criticism, confusion and frustration that tend to accompany translation. Mismatches in these expectations do matter, sometimes only a little, but sometimes very much so."⁵⁸

Form-Focused Approaches

While Nida considered a text's original form something of secondary importance (although he argued that translators should not jettison the form if it could be kept without creating difficulties for the transmission of a text's meaning), some translators have given special attention to the literary, stylistic and rhetorical features of the original texts and to the contribution they make in the communication of the biblical texts. Since literary forms, genres and stylistic features communicate much about the type of information being communicated (including the nature and purpose of the discourse and the reading/listening strategy most appropriate for any given discourse), much of the

⁵⁷ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 193.

⁵⁸ Gutt, *Translation and Relevance*, 193.

most basic orientation for a proper understanding of and engagement with the discourse will be lost if the information transmitted through the forms and genres employed is not also transmitted in the translation in one way or another. Close attention to the literary forms and features of a text may serve as a basis for an attempt to preserve those features in a translation, for the selection or adaptation of the closest analogues in a receptor language, or in order to find ways to compensate for their distortion or loss in translation. Ernst R. Wendland has published two books which promote what he calls a “literary functional-equivalence (LiFE) method of translation.”⁵⁹ This entails a careful consideration of the literary characteristics of biblical texts and their expressive and affective dynamics which one then seeks as much as possible to replicate with correspondingly “literary” resources (artistic, poetic, rhetorical, etc.) in the translation by using the rich communicative possibilities in the receptor language. To carry this out, of course, equal attention needs to be given to the most varied communicative forms and structures of the receptor language, whether they be written, oral, dramatic, musical, or of some other form. Of course, a translator committed to Gutt’s “direct translation” would be expected to maintain the original form in the translation as much as possible and trust that the reader will have the necessary resources to recognize the form and respond to it appropriately.

Even if a translator feels free to discard the particular form and literary features of the biblical text he or she must be very familiar with the literary and rhetorical (including oral/aural) resources of the receptor language if the translation is to meet the needs and fulfill the purpose for which it is intended. Within *Skopostheorie* the *Skopos* rule states that one should translate “in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function.”⁶⁰ The precise way in which the receptors might want to use the

⁵⁹ See Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the Literature of Scripture* (Publications in Translation and Textlinguistics, 1; Dallas, Tex: SIL International, 2004); idem, *Life-Style Translating: A Workbook for Bible Translators* (Publications in Translation and Textlinguistics, 2; Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2006); idem, “A Literary Approach to Biblical Text Analysis and Translation” in Wilt, ed., *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference*, 179-230. See also, Wendland, *Finding and Translating the Oral-Aural Elements in Written Language: The Case of the New Testament Epistles* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2008).

⁶⁰ Vermeer, cited in Nord, *Translating as Purposeful Activity*, 29, and Mojola and Wendland, “Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies,” 13-14. According to Nord, “loyalty” to the original text “means that the target text purpose should be compatible with the original author’s intentions” (Nord, *Translating as Purposeful Activity*, 125).

translation will usually dictate the selection of some locally known and highly valued form of communication whose own functions and communicative possibilities are fully appreciated and may only be fully exploited by those who are familiar with its nuances. The linguistic, literary or rhetorical repertoire of the receptor culture must be as thoroughly understood as that of the biblical canon if its resources are to be appropriately employed and effectively leveraged in the translation of Scripture into that language.⁶¹ As Sánchez-Cetina argues, “Indigenous communities can teach us the genres, methods of communication, and literary expression that will enable us to reach people whose tradition is more oral than written.”⁶² To learn these methods Bible translators must pay close attention not only to “the latest advances in first-world communication technology” but also “tune our ‘antennae’ towards the underprivileged recipients of the Biblical message to see what we may learn about communication and what is demanded by the poor, the young, and the outcast.”⁶³

Some of the various forms, or kinds of media, that have been utilized or suggested for biblical translation includes games, music, dance, storytelling, drama (including spontaneous dramatization), comic strips, graphic novels, radio, video, film, animation, dance, and sign language, and e-books. Each of those listed would have its own sub-genres and regionally preferred varieties.⁶⁴

Textlinguistics/Discourse Analysis

The development and application of text linguistics and discourse analysis have had a significant impact on the work of Bible translation in multiple ways. As linguists have studied and learned more about the ways in which cohesion, coherence, prominence are reflected in texts in different languages and the variety of ways in which textual boundaries, backgrounding, foregrounding, highlighting, points of de-

⁶¹ “A Biblical translation from a ‘post-missionary’ perspective” must “determine the various forms and media most adequate to reach a recipient culture. Which is the best way, the most efficient ‘channel’ to take God’s Word to that boy, girl, or farmer working in the local market?” (Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 404).

⁶² Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 405. See also James A. Maxey, *From Orality to Orality: A New Paradigm for Contextual Translation of the Bible* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade, 2009). For some orality-focused approaches to translation in the service of Christian mission and evangelism, see <http://www.oralstrategies.com/>.

⁶³ Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 405.

⁶⁴ Many translations are now also available on smart phones like Apple’s iPhone, but it remains to be seen if any will be especially produced for that medium.

parture, focus and other types of information are reflected by in written and spoken texts they have applied that understanding to the biblical texts being translated⁶⁵ and to languages into which it will be translated.⁶⁶ These kinds of features would need to be carefully studied and understood if a translation is going to reflect not only the same semantic contents as the original text but also the focus, prominence, cohesion and other discourse features. These linguistic features tend to be reflected in different ways in different languages, requiring the translator to have a very subtle and nuanced understanding of both the biblical languages and the receptor language if they are going to be preserved in some way. Dieudonné Prosper Aroga Bessong and Michael Kenmogne relate a couple examples of translations that suffered from a lack of awareness of discourse features in the receptor language:

“[I]n Obolo, one verb form is used to begin a discourse, while another reduplicated form marks crucial turning points in the story, but Bible translators were unaware of this feature in their language. Due to the misuse of verb forms, the stories of John the Baptist and Jesus seemed to be always starting, but never moving forward, and never reaching a climax! The translation sounded childish, and was thus hard to believe. Likewise, in the

⁶⁵ See, e.g., Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence: A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37 and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989); Roy L. Heller, *Narrative Structure and Discourse Constellations: An Analysis of Clause Function in Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Harvard Semitic Studies, 55; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2004); Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narratives* (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series, 295; Sheffield, Eng.: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Cynthia L. Miller, *The Pragmatics of Waw As a Discourse Marker in Biblical Hebrew Dialogue* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1999); Ernst R. Wendland, *The Discourse Analysis of Hebrew Prophetic Literature: Determining the Larger Textual Units of Hosea and Joel* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1995); Ernst R. Wendland, ed., *Discourse Perspectives on Hebrew Poetry in the Scriptures* (UBS Monograph Series, 7; Reading, England: United Bible Societies, 1994); Stephen H. Levinsohn, *Discourse Features of New Testament Greek: A Coursebook on the Information Structure of New Testament Greek* (Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2000); Jeffrey T. Reed and Stanley E. Porter, eds., *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning* (Library of New Testament Studies, 297; London: T & T Clark, 2005).

⁶⁶ Cf., e.g., Stephen H. Levinsohn, ed., *Discourse Features of Ten Languages of West-Central Africa* (Summer Institute of Linguistics and the University of Texas at Arlington Publications in Linguistics, 119; Dallas, Tex.: Summer Institute of Linguistics and the University of Texas at Arlington, 1994); Robert E. Longacre and Fran Woods, *Discourse Grammar: Studies in Indigenous Languages of Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador* (Summer Institute of Linguistics Publications in Linguistics, 52; Dallas, Tex.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1976); Michael R. Walrod, *Discourse Grammar in Ga'dang* (Dallas, Tex.: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1979).

first chapters of Matthew, incorrect use of verb forms meant everything seemed prominent, resulting in such a high information rate that listeners and readers became exhausted.⁶⁷

Bible Translation and Technological Developments

Recent advances in technology have revolutionized the work of Bible translation, as they have so much else in the world. Translators' ability to use computers, email, file-sharing programs, biblical research software and publishing software, among other things, have changed the way translators go about their work. Since Bible translation is normally a team effort, translators' need to share translation proposals, suggested revisions and other information was a greater challenge before it became common practice to carry out work on computers and to share documents via email or online file-sharing services (in places where there is easy internet access). Rapid email communication makes it possible for team members to respond back and forth several times each day, sharing documents with changes marked and comments inserted. This changes the way work is done whether team members work in different rooms in the same building, in different towns in the same country, on different continents and in radically different time zones.

The United Bible Societies have developed a program called Paratext⁶⁸ which allows translators to compare their rough draft or revision of their translation with the Greek and Hebrew texts and dozens of translations in multiple languages as well as the UBS Translation Handbook Series of commentaries written expressly for Bible translators. It also includes a variety of tools for checking a translation's accuracy and consistency. It may also serve as the basis for typesetting for a variety of publishable formats.

Translator's Workplace, a software program sponsored by SIL International and the United Bible Societies, also allows translators to consult dozens of Bible translations in a multitude of languages as well as dictionaries, lexicons, grammars, commentaries and numerous other exegetical resources, books on Bible translation and other helps.

While the two programs just mentioned are designed specifically for and available only to Bible translators, other Bible research programs are also used including BibleWorks (which includes various

⁶⁷ Bessong and Kenmogne, "Bible Translation in Africa," 369, citing Uche Aaron, "Discourse Factors in Bible Translation," *Notes on Translation* 12.1 (1998), 5.

⁶⁸ See <http://paratext.ubs-translations.org/> (accessed on March 2, 2010).

Brazilian and continental Portuguese editions of the Almeida translation as well as the Bible Society of Portugal's contemporary Portuguese translation of the Bible),⁶⁹ Logos⁷⁰ and Accordance,⁷¹ all of which also provide Hebrew and Greek texts, numerous translations in multiple languages, lexicons and dictionaries and other resources. Logos has literally thousands resources available, including advanced commentaries on the Hebrew and Greek texts, dictionaries, encyclopedias and other reference works important for biblical research. All of the programs mentioned above allow users not only to read and compare various biblical texts, translations and tools, but also to perform complex searches on the biblical and other texts.

SIL International has also developed BART: Biblical Analysis Research Tool, which allows viewing and analysis of the Hebrew Bible and Greek New Testament along with a few translations. BART allows for a variety of display, marking and highlighting options and features allowing various kinds of linguistic analysis giving attention to discourse, syntactical and semantic features of the biblical texts.

Some Bible translators are also using software tools that assist in adapting texts from one language to another. Adapt It⁷² is a program that helps translate texts from one language to another related language while CARLStudio can be used "to model languages and then to put the model to work parsing texts and adapting texts to another language."⁷³

All of these resources and a library larger than that owned by most translators may be easily carried around and accessed anywhere in the world with a small notebook computer. With them a translator may study the original texts (searching on words or phrases and accessing multiple lexicons with the click of a mouse, etc.), consult other translations to see how other translators have dealt with any verse or translation challenge, compose and format their own translation and email it to colleagues for their input and to the publishers to be produced.

The Cluster Strategy

One of the newest approaches to Bible translation is what is being called a "cluster strategy." This involves a significant paradigm shift

⁶⁹ <http://www.bibleworks.com/> (accessed on March 2, 2010).

⁷⁰ <http://www.logos.com/> (accessed on March 2, 2010).

⁷¹ <http://www.accordancebible.com/> (accessed on March 2, 2010).

⁷² <http://www.thetask.net/what/adapt-it> (accessed on March 2, 2010).

⁷³ http://www.sil.org/computing/catalog/show_software.asp?id=84 (accessed on March 2, 2010).

away from the usual approach in which a team translates the Bible into one language at a time. In this approach a team works in the context of a complex sociolinguistic unit, or a sociolinguistic cluster, where languages function in a matrix of multiple overlapping and interlocking social network. It “aims to capitalize on relatedness and relationships in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency.”⁷⁴ According to M. Paul Lewis and Jürg Stalder this approach entails “two or more language groups who will work together with a shared language development strategy, sharing personnel and resources. Languages may be grouped together to form a cluster based on linguistic relatedness, social relationships, geographic proximity, and/or a number of churches/denominations working among the same languages.”⁷⁵

This new approach is being applied by Wycliffe Bible Translators working within the Bantu language family in Africa to provide Bible translations to some of the 250 Bantu languages without the Scriptures. They hope to be able to take advantage of Bantu linguistic and cultural similarities to carry out their translation work with greater speed and efficiency than normal, without sacrificing on the quality of the translation work.⁷⁶ It is perhaps especially in this type of work that tools like the Adapt It program mentioned in the previous section may prove most useful.

Attending to Issues of Cultural Bias and Ideological Concerns

Contemporary approaches to Bible translation tend to be much more fully marked by awareness of problems of cultural bias or distortion and concerns about ideological issues and abuses in the past and a commitment to translate the Bible in ways that do not promote injustice or alienation or serve cultural agendas, especially the interests of the powerful at the expense of the powerless. Translators, like writers/readers and speakers/listeners, have become more sensitive to ethnic, cultural, gender and other types of bias and try to avoid perpetuating them in their translations. We have already mentioned the fact that until recently Bible translation in missionary contexts rarely acknowledged the work of the mother-tongue translators, referring to them as “language informants” and the Bible translation work in such

⁷⁴ M. Paul Lewis and Jürg Stalder, “Clustering: A Conceptual Framework and Its Implications” (unpublished paper), 4.

⁷⁵ Lewis and Stalder, “Clustering,” 3.

⁷⁶ Cf. <http://www.thetask.net/what/bantu-language-clusters> (accessed on March 2, 2010).

contexts has generally been carried out according to the visions, agendas and priorities of the (wealthier) missionary organizations with little say or leadership being accorded to the receptor community. Missionaries tended to be dismissive of the peoples and cultures to which they had gone to translate the Bible and advance the gospel of Christ. Although the peoples to which they had gone often lived in cultures that had more in common with the cultures of the biblical authors the missionaries tended to look down on those cultures and ignore the potential that could be found in them for effective translation of Christian concepts. There was a cultural and religious arrogance that tended to look upon the local religious and cultural resources as being destitute of value or of even having salvageable elements. Edesio Sánchez-Cetina feels that “[i]n almost every example of ‘missionary Bible translations’, the overriding attitude is one that looks down on others. It is an attitude that denigrates people because they are different.”⁷⁷ He points out that ideological and theological biases may show themselves in the choice of which texts to translate. “The decision to begin translating the Gospel of John or all of the New Testament before translating the Old Testament is not fortuitous. In many circles, there is a tendency, whether conscious or not, to publish the New Testament before the Old, thus giving the New Testament priority, considering it to have more ‘spiritual value’ than the Old.”⁷⁸

Thankfully, things have begun to change and the work of Bible translation is being carried out more and more by well-trained and highly committed local leaders. In Africa, for example, “[t]rained Africans, proud of their heritage, are now bringing to light the long-ignored aspects of the Bible that correspond directly or partially to the African personality and mind-set.”⁷⁹ Now we can find an Afrocentric approach that “seeks to translate the Bible with a clear understanding of the African viewpoint. It seeks to recuperate and ‘restore Africa’ and everything African (fauna, flora) within the Biblical text and to reverse what could be perceived as conscious or even racially motivated attempts to destroy or minimize African references in the text.”⁸⁰ Bible translation that is carried out not by missionaries who have traveled to a foreign land, language and culture but by indigenous people translating into their own languages and in light of their own cultural context is often referred to as “post-missionary translation.” Some

⁷⁷ Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 398.

⁷⁸ Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 397.

⁷⁹ Bessong and Kenmogne, “Bible Translation in Africa,” 380.

⁸⁰ Bessong and Kenmogne, “Bible Translation in Africa,” 381.

post-missionary Bible translation reflects a greater sensitivity other ideological concerns that traditional missionary translations also tended to overlook. Generally, translations have tended to cater to the dominant forms of the receptor language that were used by the cultural elites, especially by wealthier adult men. Translators are now paying more attention to ways in which the forms of language chosen may alienate certain segments of society. This includes opportunities to choose vocabulary, sentence structures, literary forms or other media that would be more appropriate for children, young people, new speakers of the language, those who speak regional forms of the language, etc. In recent English Bible translations or revisions considerable thought has gone into avoiding any translation that would seem to exclude women when the original text is understood to be inclusive. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) and Today's New International Version (TNIV) – each a revision of earlier translations – both revised earlier passages that referred to “brothers” so that they now refer to “brothers and sisters” and passages that used the male pronoun generically, as in “He who....,” were changed to “The one who...” or “Those who....,” etc. A variety of moves were made to avoid any translations that were felt to be unnecessarily alienating or gender exclusive.⁸¹ This turned out to be quite controversial with respect to the TNIV since many conservative (evangelical) Christians felt that the translation was conforming itself to unbiblical cultural values and that the masculine linguistic elements were benign at worst and potentially of theological importance.⁸² The debate has not ended, but it has temporarily cooled down as people await a revision of the TNIV expected to arrive in 2011 (on the quadricentennial of the publication of the King James Version). All recent English versions have demonstrated greater sensitivity in this area⁸³ and it seems clear that as cul-

⁸¹ See also, David E. Stein, *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006).

⁸² See Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem, *The TNIV and the Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy* (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 2004); Mark L. Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?: The Challenge of Bible Translation & Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998); D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive-Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998); Ann Nyland, *More Than Meets the Eye: The Campaign to Control Gender Translation in Bibles* (Uralla, N.S.W.: Smith and Stirling, 2007).

⁸³ The New English Translation (NET) and the English Standard Version (ESV) both made some of the same kinds of changes to traditional generic masculine usages, but to a lesser extent and with little attention drawn to those changes. Some of the people behind the ESV (published by Crossway Books) have been arguing for what they call “essentially literal translation” (cf. C. John Collins et al, *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation*

tural linguistic sensitivities develop translations will always need to respond in appropriate ways.

Postcolonial Bible translation tends to be rather strident in its criticisms of how Bible translation has been carried out in the past. R. S. Sugirtharajah points out that “Bible translation has long been implicated in diverse imperialist projects in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and South America.” Translators and translations are seen as tools of imperial ambitions. “Since the invader and invaded spoke different languages and practiced different religions, translation played a crucial role in conquering and converting the other.”⁸⁴ As suggested by his twin references to “conquering” and “converting” the other, his concerns go right to the heart of the Christian missionary enterprise, not only in the sense of cross-cultural missions. Sugirtharajah points out that “[t]heorizing about biblical translation was often undertaken and emerged within the framework of missionary practice. All new translations are seen as effective instruments of evangelization.”⁸⁵ Note the militaristic language he associates with the idea: “Any new revision and newly updated, or aesthetically fine, version was regarded as an essential *weapon* in spreading the gospel among people.”⁸⁶ He argues that “Biblical translation has to move beyond the narrow understanding of mission as a simple revival of a textualized biblical faith that is intolerant, smug and superior.... What postcolonial biblical translation attempts to do is to relocate the task of translation within a postmissionary context, and to promote a less predatory nature of the Christian faith.”⁸⁷ All Bible translators would agree that an intolerant, smug and superior faith, or one that uses that Bible as a weapon for predatory exploits, is hardly a faith that reflects the self-giving nature and example of Christ which the Christian Bible stresses, and yet it is clear that the accusations are not without basis.

Bible translators are becoming more and more aware of the ways in which they and their work tend to serve particular ideological agendas and not merely neutral theories or approaches to the transfer of meaning from one language to another. Lourens de Vries points out that “translators never work in a pure and clean, ahistorical, transla-

[Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2005]; Leland Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2002]).

⁸⁴ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 156.

⁸⁵ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 171.

⁸⁶ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 172 (emphasis added).

⁸⁷ Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 172.

tion-theoretical world in which they follow translation-theoretical agendas. Rather, they serve commissioners and audiences in specific times and places who want texts with which they can do the things they want to do....” Among other things, “social and political factors ... determine the kinds of text translators are expected to deliver. Some Bible translations are meant as a missionary tool to plant a church and focus on communicating the good news; other translations are for communities that want to solemnly celebrate the Bible in the liturgy. Some audiences and commissioners see the Bible as a literary document from antiquity with an extremely important cultural and historical role.”⁸⁸

The clear commitment that most Bible translators have to the spread of the Christian faith and to providing translations that will serve most effectively in the spread of Christianity has been described by some in terms of crass manipulation. Note the way Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko contextualize this approach to Bible translation in the introduction to their book on *Translation and Power*:

“In the 1950s and 1960s, as Madison Avenue tightened its grip on the United States and the world and pioneered techniques for using mass communications for cultural control, practicing translators began consciously to calibrate their translation techniques to achieve effects they wished to produce in their audiences, whether those effects were religious faith, consumption of products, or literary success. In short, translators began to realize how translated texts could manipulate readers to achieve desired effects.”⁸⁹

As Bible translators wrestle with difficult ideological questions and the potential for using translation as a tool for manipulation they (and their critics) may still come to differing views regarding the most benign, or least ideologically offensive, approach to take in terms of the foreignizing or domesticating dichotomy discussed by Schleiermacher. In contexts where Bibles are being translated for the first time, the influence of traditional literal translations in dominant cultures external to the receptor community is clearly a problem. Elements that are foreign to the receptor culture and that have their origin in the domi-

⁸⁸ Lourens de Vries, “Introduction: Methodology of Bible Translation” in Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation*, 275-6.

⁸⁹ Edwin Gentzler and Maria Tymoczko, “Introduction” in Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, eds., *Translation and Power* (Amherst and Boston, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), xi.

nant linguistic, religious or cultural context of outsiders involved in the translation project communicate a dependency and subservience to that external culture that is bound to create problems. Discussions of post-missionary translations tend to emphasize the value of translations that reflect as complete an assimilation to the receptor culture and its linguistic and cultural context as possible. Edesio Sánchez-Cetina has argued that “[t]he goal and dream of all responsible translators will always be that when an individual or community receives the Bible, first of all, they will receive it in their own language, and respond exclaiming, ‘How wonderful God’s Word sounds in my own language! It does not sound like a translation. On the contrary, it seems to be written in my tongue!’”⁹⁰ Such an approach is clearly seen to serve the evangelistic/missionary commitment of the churches.⁹¹

Others, however, wonder or worry about the ethics of domesticating a foreign text. Is it more ethical, even more Christian, to recognize and respect the ‘otherness’ of the voice of another, or to assimilate it so that it sounds much like one’s own voice? “Translators must still choose whether to ‘domesticate’ their text, that is, make it sound just like a mother-tongue speaker is speaking, or to ‘foreignize’ it, carrying over some of the features and speech styles of the Greek and Hebrew and thus preserving the ‘otherness’ of the text.”⁹²

Laurence Venuti recognizes both the advantages and the problems with domesticating translations:

“The popular aesthetic requires fluent translations that produce the illusory effect of transparency, and this means adhering to the current standard dialect while avoiding any dialect, register, or style that calls attention to words as words and therefore preempts the reader’s identification. As a result, fluent translation may enable a foreign text to engage a mass readership, even a text from an excluded foreign literature, and thereby initiate a significant canon reformation. But such a translation simultaneously reinforces the major language and its many other linguistic and cultural exclusions while masking the inscription of domestic values. Fluency is assimilationist, presenting to domestic readers a realistic representation inflected with their own

⁹⁰ Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 408. Although it is less explicit, a similar impression is given by the essay by Bessong and Kenmogne on “Bible Translation in Africa.”

⁹¹ Such a translation “produces greater impact in the evangelization and training of people, and leads to considerable increase in church membership, while spurring people on to an even deeper faith” (Sánchez-Cetina, “Word of God, Word of the People,” 408).

⁹² Zogbo, “Introduction: The Field Today,” 345.

codes and ideologies as if it were an immediate encounter with a foreign text and culture."⁹³

He clearly comes down in favor of foreignizing versions but he recognizes that all translations are domesticating to one extent or another. Translation "inevitably domesticates foreign texts, inscribing them with linguistic and cultural values that are intelligible to specific domestic constituencies." "Bad translation shapes toward the foreign culture a domestic attitude that is ethnocentric: 'generally under the guise of transmissibility, [it] carries out a systematic negation of the strangeness of the foreign work.'"⁹⁴ "Good translation aims to limit this ethnocentric negation: it stages 'an opening, a dialogue, a cross-breeding, a decentering' and thereby forces the domestic language and culture to register the foreignness of the foreign text."⁹⁵ In his view a translator can and should limit the ethnocentric movement inherent in translation by taking into account "the interests of more than just those of a cultural constituency that occupies a dominant position in the domestic culture." In contrast to the "loyalty" that should govern translation according to *Skopostheorie*, a translator should be "prepared to be disloyal to the domestic cultural norms that govern the identity-forming process of translation by calling attention to what they enable and limit, admit and exclude, in the encounter with foreign texts."⁹⁶ His view is that such an approach may "create a readership that is more open to linguistic and cultural differences."⁹⁷

Contemporary approaches to Bible translation have benefitted from great linguistic, literary, sociological and interdisciplinary insights and from tremendous technological advances. However, they have also brought translators face to face with some difficult problems arising from philosophical consideration of the ideological implications of

⁹³ Laurence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 12.

⁹⁴ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, 81.

⁹⁵ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, 81, citing Antoine Berman, *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany* (trans. S. Heyvaert; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 5, 4.

⁹⁶ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, 83.

⁹⁷ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, 87. In this context Sugirtharajah (*Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, 177) reminds us that "Bible translations are produced by translators who belong to the inner circle of English, but their product is used widely in second and third language contexts," suggesting that such Bible translators need to ponder their responsibilities to readers who do not belong to the inner circle or dominant language group but may be marginalized by that group.

their work and the varying political viewpoints that shape those philosophical perspectives. Institutions like the Nida School for Translation Studies⁹⁸ brings together leading thinkers and practitioners from the fields of translation studies, Bible translation, biblical scholarship, linguistic and culture studies, and other cognate disciplines as a foundation for creative interdisciplinary thinking that might advance the work of Bible translation in ways that do as much good as possible around the world while avoiding some of the errors of the past and the dangers that lie ahead. Certainly the issues that have been raised about cultural bias and ideological factors in translation make it clear that much wisdom and grace is needed for this work.

*Contemporary Portuguese Bible
Translations in Light of Contemporary
Approaches to Bible Translation*

The number of Portuguese Bible translations and editions produced in Portugal and Brazil is too large to be exhaustively analyzed here. And since elsewhere in this work Fr. Herculano Alves had provided an overview of Portuguese language Bible translations prepared by or commonly used within the Roman Catholic community this section will focus on translations prepared by or commonly used by the Protestant community. The sections below will look at the characteristics of some of the more popular Bible translations in use today and then compare their treatments of parts of Galatians 4:21-25 to see how their different approaches to translation are reflected in the rendering of one of the many challenging passages in the Scriptures.

Revisions of the translation of Almeida in Portugal and Brazil

The traditional Protestant Portuguese Bible translation published in 1748 by João Ferreira de Almeida and Jacobus op den Akker (but known primarily by the name of the former) has undergone numerous revisions in the last few decades. The Bible Society of Portugal has published updates to the Edição Revista e Corrigida in 1968 and 2001 and the Bible Society of Brazil has published the Edição Revista e Corrigida

⁹⁸ See <http://www.nidainstitute.org/TheNidaSchool/> (accessed on March 2, 2010). The Nida School carries out its work in partnership with the Society of Biblical Literature, SIL International, the United Bible Societies, the University of Massachusetts Amherst Translation Center, the San Pellegrino Institute, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

of 1995 and the Edição Revista e Atualizada in 1993. The Edição Revista e Atualizada (henceforth ARA) is the only edition with significant changes from the others and it has been the most popular choice for study Bibles published in Brazil. While various kinds of minor updating have been carried out (most thoroughly in the Brazilian ARA), these editions all remain quite literal, formal equivalent and close to what Gutt would call a “direct translation.” All of them except the ARA continue to reflect the same textual basis of the original translation rather than the textual form found in the best editions of the Greek and Hebrew texts.

These editions of the Almeida Bible stay as close as possible to the syntactical and lexical forms of the texts on which they are based without breaking the basic rules of Portuguese style. The reading level is rather high, the style is formal and in all the revisions except the ARA the language tends to feel archaic at times. The usage of forms of address (*tratamento*) found in the translation differs significantly from their usage in contemporary Portuguese culture. Almeida’s version remains highly esteemed and continues to exercise tremendous influence and authority. Portuguese churches that continue to use the Almeida version would benefit from a thorough revision that reflects contemporary language and understandings of the best Greek and Hebrew texts, including insights drawn linguistic and other insights since the time of Almeida.

*Tradução Interconfessional em Português Corrente*⁹⁹

The *Tradução Interconfessional em Português Corrente* (TIPC), also known as the *Boa Nova* with the same translation now also found in the new *Bíblia para Todos* (henceforth BpT), is a common language version, translated from the best editions of the Greek and Hebrew texts. The work was carried out by a team of Catholic and Protestant biblical scholars with a view to presenting the text at an accessible level in natural contemporary Portuguese. The Portuguese vocabulary, syntax and style were all carefully chosen so as to reflect the meaning found in the original texts in language that would seem perfectly normal to the average Portuguese reader. For instance, the team incorporated the more common form of address, “vocês” (rather than “vós”), for most second person plural pronouns. It is a dynamic equivalent and rather domes-

⁹⁹ In the interests of full disclosure I should point out that I served on the team of revisers responsible for the latest edition of this Bible.

ticated translation – closer to what Gutt would call an “indirect translation.” Work on the New Testament was completed in 1978 and the Old Testament was published in 1993 with the first complete edition of the *Boa Nova* Bible. The translation was published in both a Roman Catholic edition (with the deuterocanonical books included and bearing the approval of the Portuguese Bishops Conference) and a Protestant edition (lacking the deuterocanonical books). Both editions included brief introductions to each book of the Bible, as well as notes regarding textual, historical and interpretive issues, a glossary and maps. This was the first dynamic equivalent translation produced in Portugal and it was generally very well received. Some of the paratextual material – specifically some book introductions and footnotes, reflected historical-critical views that were not well received within some evangelical churches and that had a slightly negative effect on its reception in parts of that community.

A partially reconstituted team of scholars completed a very thorough revision of the New Testament in 2004 and a more limited revision of the Old Testament was published in 2009 in a literary edition¹⁰⁰ published by Editora Bertrand (Lisbon) under the title *A Bíblia para Todos*. The revisions took into consideration criticisms of the original translation as well as more recent developments in the Portuguese language, in the understanding of the biblical languages and the interpretation of the biblical texts. One of the stylistic changes entailed reducing the frequency with which “você” was employed in light of distaste for the term in some regional dialects. The revision is also a bit less explicative and slightly more literal in numerous places. The book introductions have been completely rewritten and the notes slightly revised.

O Livro

O Livro, the result of the work of an individual translator, reflects the more highly interpretive and fully assimilated type of translation originally found in the American *Living Bible*. It tries to avoid religious jargon and translates the perceived meaning on a thought-by-thought basis rather than a more literal word-by-word approach. It emphasizes the values of understanding as well as clear and compelling style. The introduction asserts that the translation is “uma das mais fáceis de com-

¹⁰⁰ This edition omits verse and chapter numbers from the text (with the exception of chapter numbers in the psalms) as well as headings, so that the reading experience is in that way similar to the experience of reading other kinds of literature (and to the way the texts were originally composed).

preender” and that “as ideias são expressas aqui como as pessoas comuns dos nossos dias as diriam, com as nossas frases idiomáticas, figuras de linguagem e expressões típicas.”¹⁰¹ Such a self-description clearly places it on the domesticated end of the spectrum and it certainly does have a very accessible reading level. Prominent paratextual material includes an introduction to the volume as a whole which addresses a variety of questions and then provides a variety of excerpts relating to a number of life issues. It also includes one-paragraph introductions to each book providing a conservative Christian (evangelical) orientation to their context and contents, section headings, footnotes (in the New Testament) indicating the sources of Old Testament quotations and, occasionally, footnotes indicating alternative interpretations or very concise comments. While *O Livro* uses the English language *Living Bible* as its primary point of departure, the translator frequently consulted the Greek and Hebrew texts as well as other contemporary translations as he did his work. Inasmuch as the original texts were consulted *O Livro*, like the TIPC, is based on the best contemporary editions of the Greek and Hebrew texts. This translation, produced under the authority of the International Bible Society with collaboration in Portugal from NÚCLEO – Centro de Publicações Cristãs, was published as a complete Bible by the Bible Society of Portugal in 2001. The New Testament had previously been published by Publicações Europa-América.

A Nova Tradução em Linguagem de Hoje

This is a Brazilian dynamic equivalent (and somewhat domesticated) translation (henceforth NTLH). It originally appeared in 1988 as *A Bíblia na Linguagem de Hoje* but it underwent a very thorough revision and appeared essentially as a new translation with this new name in 2000. The translation is based on modern editions of the Greek and Hebrew texts that reflects contemporary Brazilian usage of the Portuguese language. It is presented at a level that is very accessible and comprehensible by people who have had little to no previous exposure to the Bible (it uses a restricted vocabulary of just over four thousand words, compared to the vocabulary of over eight thousand words found in the Almeida Bible). The translators sought to employ simple, popular language while avoiding any slang or regionalisms¹⁰² and the

¹⁰¹ *O Livro: A Bíblia para Hoje* (Lisbon: Sociedade Bíblica de Portugal, 1999), vii.

¹⁰² <http://www.sbb.org.br/interna.asp?areaID=64> (accessed on March 5, 2010).

translation is expressly commended by the Bible Society of Brazil as an evangelistic tool.¹⁰³ This translation has been used as the base translation in a number of study Bibles.

A Nova Versão Internacional

This Brazilian version (henceforth NVI) was sponsored by the International Bible Society, the sponsors of the English language New International Version (NIV) which served as the inspiration for this translation. The translation was carried out by a team of evangelical scholars based on Greek and Hebrew (and Aramaic) texts, with a view towards reproducing the style and approach found in the English NIV. The publishers affirm that it is an “evangelical and contemporary” version.¹⁰⁴ The translators’ goals suggest they were seeking to present a dynamic equivalent translation which would be literal only where that would not inhibit the communication of the meaning to the modern Brazilian reader.¹⁰⁵ The version comes with a preface that explains the nature and characteristics of the translation (in the self-congratulatory style which is more or less standard fare for such introductions and seems intended to win the confidence of the reader and strengthen the marketability of the product). The four qualities that they aimed for were accuracy, stylistic beauty, clarity, and dignity.¹⁰⁶ Paratextual material accompanying the translation includes section headers and footnotes that mention alternative translations or textual issues, or that provide (on occasion) extremely concise comments on the meaning of the text. This translation has been used as the base for a number of study Bibles, most notably, the *Bíblia de Estudo NVI* (adapted from the English language *NIV Study Bible*).

Comparing Portuguese Bible Translations

One of the basic challenges faced by those translating the Bible into Portuguese is, of course, the problem of the choice of forms of address.

¹⁰³ Cf. <http://www.sbb.org.br/interna.asp?areaID=63> (accessed March 5, 2010).

¹⁰⁴ <http://www1.uol.com.br/bibliaworld/nvi/oque.htm>.

¹⁰⁵ “Seu alvo é comunicar a Palavra de Deus ao leitor moderno com tanta clareza e impacto quanto os exercícios pelo texto bíblico original entre os primeiros leitores. Por essa razão, alguns trechos bíblicos foram traduzidos com maior ou menor grau de literalidade, levando sempre em conta a compreensão do leitor. O texto da NVI não se caracteriza por alta erudição vernacular, nem por um estilo muito popular. Regionalismos, termos vulgares, anacronismos e arcaísmos foram também deliberadamente evitados” (from the preface).

¹⁰⁶ From the preface.

Since the biblical texts do not distinguish between formal and informal forms of address and unhesitatingly use the second person singular and plural forms of verbs and pronouns to refer to any and all people being directly addressed, it could be said that there is no such thing as a formal equivalent in Portuguese to such usages since Portuguese readers may be expected to think of second person singular forms as suggesting an intimacy that was never associated with them in the original languages since there was no other option and the same forms were equally appropriate for all people. The Almeida versions consistently use “tu” (and associated verbal and pronominal forms) for the second person singular and “vós” (and associated verbal and pronominal forms) for the second person plural and never use “você” or “vocês.” Since “você” and “vocês” represent circumlocutions and require the usage of third person verbs one may well argue that they could not be considered appropriate translations for a version seeking to provide formal equivalence. But the variety of options for personal address from which speaker and writers are expected to choose in any communication situation means that whatever option the translator chooses will either not reflect the consistent usages found in the biblical texts or will not fit naturally into the sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic realities of the Portuguese language. Of course, regional differences also make it extremely difficult to provide a translation that will feel natural to people from all linguistic variations.

Translations prepared in Portugal consistently avoid the use of “você.” “Tu” is used by all speakers in the Almeida versions, the TIPC (and BpT), and even in *O Livro*, even when addressing people of authority with whom no relationship exists, and this is never meant in a dismissive or demeaning way.

As might be expected, Brazilian translations tend to use “você” rather freely (with the exception of the Brazilian versions of the Almeida translation). In the NTLH “tu” seems to be reserved exclusively for addressing God; “você” is used elsewhere. The NVI uses an interesting mix. People usually address each other with “você” but God is addressed as “tu” and when Jesus is addressed it is almost always as “tu” even though he almost always addresses everyone else (including his disciples) as “você” (as does God), but this pattern seems to be reversed in Christ’s dialogues with the high priest and with Pilate during his trials, where they address Jesus as “você” and he addresses them as “tu” (see, e.g., Matthew 26:62-64; 27:11-13).

Brazilian translations consistently use “vocês” for the second person plural. The TIPC rarely uses “vós” (189 times compared to over

1500 times in the Almeida versions).¹⁰⁷ On the contrary, “vocês” is used 888 times in the TIPC. *O Livro* consistent with its less formal register (and slightly more domesticated approach) avoids any use of “vós,” preferring “vocês” throughout.

Distinctions in how the translations deal with the question of functional/dynamic equivalence or formal equivalence or of domesticating versus foreignizing tendencies, as well as a few other observations, will be drawn out of a comparison of the ways the various translations render some parts of Galatians 4:21-25. The beginning of v. 21 is translated “Dizei-me vós” in the Almeida versions, which reflect more traditional and historical usage. The NVI has “Digam-me vocês” while *O Livro* simply has “Digam-me.” The NTLH has “Vocês que querem estar debaixo da lei, me digam uma coisa.” The first edition of the TIPC translated the whole verse “Vocês que desejam estar sujeitos à lei, digam-me lá se conhecem o que diz a lei.” Here “digam-me lá” had set a much more informal tone than the other translations. The revised version of the TIPC now reads, “Se o vosso desejo é estarem sujeitos à lei, digam-me lá como é que nem conhecem o que a lei diz.” It thus replaces the “vocês” with a circumlocution using “vosso” and retains the informal “digam-me lá.”

The identity of the law mentioned in v. 21 is handled differently by different versions, each one reflecting different levels of accommodation for the intended readers. The Almeida versions simply leave it as a lowercase, unmarked “law,” trusting that the readers of the translation will understand the referent as easily as the readers of the original Greek text. Some (NVI, NTLH) capitalize the word to signal that it entails a reference to the Jewish law (i.e., the law of Moses). The TIPC provides an asterisk beside the word, indicating there is a glossary entry for the word (where one would learn that it most likely referred to the Mosaic law). Anyone wanting to find out more about the word’s meaning would find helpful information in the glossary. *O Livro*, not counting on the readers to recognize the referent, makes the reference explicit, translating it as “a lei judaica.”

Subtle preferences of style and register are reflected in the translation of the opening words of v. 23. In what may be the descending order of formality, the Almeida versions have “Porque está escrito” while the NVI has “Pois está escrito.” The TIPC has “Pois, conforme está es-

¹⁰⁷ The *Boa Nova* tends to prefer using circumlocutions employing the third person plural verb with some form of “vosso(s)” or “vossa(s)” in the near context to indicate the second person plural without using a nominative pronoun where possible. “Vosso(s)” or “vossa(s)” appears 1,356 times in the *Boa Nova*.

crito," the NTLH has "Ela diz," and *O Livro* has "Diz lá." I take the use of "pois" (instead of "porque" or another more formal equivalent) and of "diz" rather than "escrito" to be marks of a less formal style.

In Galatians 4:23, the elliptical expression referring to one "begotten according to the flesh" (κατὰ σάρκα γεγέννηται) is rendered in a variety of ways, including the similarly elliptical "nasceu segundo a carne" (all versions of Almeida). Other versions provide more interpretive renderings, from "nasceu de modo natural" (NVI), to "veio ao mundo como qualquer criança" (TIPC), "nasceu dum tentativa humana para fazer cumprir a promessa de Deus" (*O Livro*). All of the alternatives clarify the significance of the Greek word in this context, but do not allow the reader to recognize any connection with other references to "the flesh" (σάρξ) or to the flesh-Spirit (σάρξ-πνεῦμα) dualism which runs throughout the letter (cf. Gal. 3:3; 4:29; 5:16-17; 6:8). The Almeida versions preserve those intratextual links by their more consistent usage of the traditional term "carne" in its multiple occurrences, but are less likely to be properly understood in this individual case. Depending on the intended readers and the purpose of the translation, translators may need to choose which aspects of a text's meaning they will prioritize and will seek to communicate and which other aspects of a text's meaning they will not be able to preserve.

The different approaches to translation are reflected in the way each version renders the expression ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα in Galatians 4:24. Assuming Paul's expression refers to a type of allegorical interpretation that was well known in both Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts, some translations use the modern word "alegoria" or "alegórica" that has come down to European languages from the Greek. So the ARA has "Estas coisas são alegóricas," other versions of Almeida have "o que se entende por alegoria." Versions that are either uncomfortable with the concept of allegorical interpretation or that simply do not think their readers can be expected to know what it means or entails either provide what they hope to be a modern dynamic equivalent, as in "Isto tem um significado mais profundo" (TIPC) or "Isto serve como um símbolo" (NTLH). Finally, one rendering, "Isto é usado aqui como uma ilustração" (NVI) and the omission of any translation for these words in *O Livro* (which translates the first part of the verse, "Ora estas duas mulheres representam os dois pactos que Deus fez com o povo," reflecting only what comes after the troublesome words) might be seen as even more highly domesticated results. One wonders if these renderings, both found in works reflecting an explicitly evangelical context, reflect the disapproval of allegorical interpretation within

many/most forms of evangelicalism and the possibility that a more literal rendering could be taken to legitimize allegorical interpretation in churches today. The NVI does provide a footnote to the translation which reads, “Grego: alegoria,” so that attentive readers may recognize that there is something more than mere illustration at work here.¹⁰⁸

The opening clause in Galatians 4:25 is marked by textual and interpretive problems which are reflected in the variety of translations offered. Remarkably, none of the translations give any indication that there are any textual and interpretive problems. The older Almeida versions render the difficult clause, “Ora, esta Agar é Sinai, um monte da Arábia.” The ARA has, “Ora, Agar é o monte Sinai, na Arábia” (reflecting a different view of the function of the word “monte” [ὄρος] in the text). It is not clear if Paul is referring to “Mount Sinai in Arabia” or “Sinai, a mountain in Arabia” (where the latter would suggest the readers are not expected to know what “Sinai” is).¹⁰ All the other translations agree that we are dealing with a reference to “Mount Sinai.” All but the Almeida versions understand the verb ἐστὶν (“é”), in the context of a reference to allegorical interpretation, to mean “represents” (allegorically), and translate it so as to explicitly express that understanding. Thus, the TIPC/BpT reads, “Ora, Agar representa o Monte Sinai na Arábia” and the NVI reads, similarly, “Hagar representa o monte Sinai, na Arábia”¹¹⁰ and, again, the TNLH has, “Pois Agar representa o monte Sinai, na Arábia.”¹¹¹

As has been demonstrated by attending just to some translation choices in this limited text, all these translations (like all other translations) reflect particular translation purposes and intended readerships and those purposes and receptor communities/demographics are reflected in the translation choices made along the way.

¹⁰⁸ The English NIV (the primary influence on the NVI) renders the relevant part, “These things may be taken figuratively.”

¹⁰⁹ In every other occurrence in the LXX and the NT the word “mount” usually comes before “Sinai” in references to “Mount Sinai” (with or without an intervening article; see LXX Exod. 19:11,18,20,23; 24:16; 31:18; 34:2,4,29,32; Lev. 7:38; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34; Num. 3:1; 28:6; Neh. 9:13; Acts 7:30,38; Gal. 4:24), but in Josephus the expression τὸ Σιναῖον ὄρος (with “Sinai” [spelled slightly differently] preceding “mount”) is common (see Josephus, *Ant.* 2:283-284,291,323,349; 3:1,62,95,295).

¹¹⁰ This seems remarkable, since the NVI translated the key verb as “é usado aqui como uma ilustração,” which would typically suggest a more indirect relationship than one in which one thing “represents” another. The language of representation seems to fit better with the idea of a “symbol” found in the NTLH or even the “significado mais profundo” in the TIPC.

¹¹¹ *O Livro* restructures vv. 24-25 and has “Agar, a mulher escrava, representa o Monte Sinai” within v. 24 and describes Mount Sinai as being “na Arábia” in v. 25.

Conclusion

There is reason to be grateful for the variety of translations – and even types of translations – that are available in the Portuguese language. They all reflect translators’ tremendous commitment to the goal of making the message of Scripture known to those who are interested, whether due to literary and historical interests or religious commitment or curiosity. The various translations discussed here have all been carried out in the finest traditions of biblical translation. It is unfortunate that at times (not so much in Portugal as in other contexts) proponents of one type of translation or another have felt the need to demean or even demonize translations which reflect a different translation philosophy or which have a different purpose (*Skopos*) or readership in mind. Learning in this area continues, of course, as it does in every other area. Issues that future translation work in Portugal might want to give attention to whether or not some concerns raised within some sectors of the field of translation studies about the potential sociolinguistic impact of translation work have any validity. Should Bible translators and Bible publishers be concerned about the homogenization of language that translation work tends to promote and about the potential marginalization of forms of the language other than the most dominant one or about the creation or use of artificial hybrid forms of the language which are not truly reflective of any particular region but are slightly at odds to a greater or lesser degree with all the authentic distinctions in language use that exist in regions of the country? Should we have some translation(s) in which speakers from all parts of Portugal (and/or Brazil and PALOP) recognize that at least some parts of their Bible “speak Portuguese” just like they do (rather than almost like they do), even if other parts speak it the way it is spoken in other parts of the country? Do Peter, Paul, James and John, for example, all need to write in the same regional accent? Did they actually write with the same regional accents in Greek?

In light of generational distinctions in language use, should all of our translations prefer one generation’s preferred language usages over the others, or could some works possibly reflect a younger (or more informal) tone and others that of the more mature generation (or a more formal tone). Again, do the original texts themselves reflect any diversity on these issues? Does the editing of the Gospel of Mark found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke point to regional, generational, or other kinds of linguistic heterogeneity that could or should be more

fully reflected in at least some translation work? Or do the differences in style between earlier and later parts of the Pauline corpus point in this direction?

In all cases, translations should be careful to explain to their readers exactly what their translation philosophy is (preferably without taking the opportunity to critique other philosophies or approaches which might also be valuable and useful for other readers or purposes) and how it governed translation choices in those areas that challenge all (Bible) translators. Good introductions to our Bible translations could go a long way towards helping our readers understand the challenges of translation and the strengths and weaknesses of every approach to Bible translation and lead to a culture of even greater mutual respect rather than one contributing in any way to an ongoing cold war over approaches to translation.

In the future Portuguese translations might also give some greater attention to the issue of transparency by providing a greater number of footnotes or other indicators in cases where alternative translations are quite possible, or where the actual meaning or the textual base is uncertain and take care to avoid asserting one preferred interpretation (especially in footnotes) when it might be more ethical to alert readers to other possibilities as well.

Finally, over the last forty years the focus of attention in the world of Portuguese Bible translation has been on providing people with access to the best possible common language or dynamic equivalent versions. Prior to that Scripture had been experienced almost exclusively in more formal equivalent translations (especially versions of Almeida) and there was great need for much more accessible alternatives. It would be good to continue to improve upon the common language or dynamic equivalent translations now available, but also to turn some attention to the need for an updated formal equivalent translation which reflects the best work in modern textual criticism, lexicography and exegetical study and could be a valuable tool for careful study of the Scriptures by those without knowledge of the biblical languages. The Roman Catholic *Bíblia Sagrada para o Terceiro Milénio da Encarnação* (Lisbon: Difusora Bíblica) comes very close to what I have in mind, although the canonical form and some of the paratextual material that accompanies the translation and that makes it even more valuable to the religious community for which it was intended makes it less suitable for or appealing to readers from outside that community.

Given the limited resources for Bible translation work within the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP), could the clus-

ter approach to preparing translations for related languages be a model that should be adopted for projects that could produce Bible translations (or translation products) developed by a committed team representing various sociolinguistic contexts within the CPLP to meet the needs of more than one community at a time? Are there more efficient, and collaborative ways than the approaches taken heretofore to accomplish the work that needs to be done?

All those who have contributed to the work of Bible translation in the Portuguese language are to be commended and I particularly want to commend the work of the Bible Society of Portugal for its commitment to working on interconfessional collaborative projects intended to meet the Bible translation needs of as many religious communities as possible. We can hope that the work of translating the Bible into Portuguese (in an ever greater variety of media and language forms) will continue without stop so that people from all sectors of the CPLP may have greater and more fruitful exposure to, and understanding of, the Scriptures, and that that translation work will make even greater contributions to the health of the churches, communities and societies in which the Scriptures are read or otherwise engaged, pondered and applied in life and worship.

