

# Christianity & Culture

Evangelical Theology in Post-Christian Britain Conference,  
Alfreton, Derbyshire, Saturday September 25–26, 2015

## Equivalence and Bible Translation: Cultural Concerns and Concepts

Andy Cheung

### KEY WORDS

| Bible Translation | Equivalence | Cultural Turn |  
| Functionalism | Translation theory |

### ABSTRACT

Since the middle of the 20th century, 'secular' translation theory has moved from a predominantly linguistic activity to one that incorporates sociocultural elements. The so-called 'cultural turn' of around the early 1980s precipitated significant changes in the way translations were conceived and created. The movement from linguistics-oriented study to a more cultural perspective has been pronounced among scholars working in 'secular' fields but is much less common in Bible translation circles. To date, Bible translators have exhibited stronger adherence to the older equivalence-based linguistics methods but there are good reasons to consider issues raised by research undertaken in 'secular' translation studies. This article explores these issues from the perspective of Bible translation highlighting items relevant to evangelicals. Certain criticisms appear less valid than others but overall, there is much to gain from considering Bible translation from a more cultural and functionalist perspective.

### INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to consider the general notion of equivalence in Bible translation, including Eugene Nida's concept of dynamic equivalence, together with a discussion of contemporary comments and critiques. Perhaps as a result of Nida's close association with Bible translation, his ideas remain significantly more influential among Bible translators than among 'secular' translation theorists.<sup>1</sup> There is useful research in language and linguistics studies that may be helpful for Bible translation work.

Academic research in translation studies, be it in sacred texts, children's books, newspaper

articles, science fiction, medical notes, or legal publications, may be expected to share common academic bases. In general they do: translation scholars commonly interact across the spectrum of human writing. But in Bible translation circles, there remains a particular adherence to Eugene Nida's views – especially in terms of advocating dynamic equivalence.<sup>2</sup>

Although Nida's role as a prominent Bible translator probably accounts in the main for his continuing influence, another factor is

1 See Andy Cheung, "A History of Twentieth Century Translation Theory and Its Application for Bible Translation," *Journal of Translation* 9, no. 1 (2013).

2 See for instance Scott MacLochlainn who observes that "for Bible translators working among language groups that have no history of Bible translation, this theory of dynamic equivalence has remained the guiding and foundational approach to translation." Scott MacLochlainn, "Divinely Generic: Bible Translation and the Semiotics of Circulation," *Signs and Society* 3, no. 2 (2015): 235f.

the unique status of Scripture: the source text is sacred. That fosters particular reverence for Nida's notion of linguistic equivalence. When the prominence of the source text is combined with cultural concerns in the target text community, a number of problems may arise. This article assesses some of the potential issues deriving from such equivalence-based translation.

\* \* \*

In translation studies, 'equivalence' is usually understood as a general term that refers to the nature and extent of the relationship between a source text and a translation. Typically, it concerns the linguistic relationship between two texts, a relationship that can be examined at a wide level, such as a discourse or paragraph, or limited to a sentence, word or morpheme.

Until about 1980, scholars working in *translation studies* – in the broadest academic grouping, not just Bible translation circles – were content enough with the above notion. Linguists such as J.C. Catford could assert, with little dissension, that translation is “a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another”<sup>3</sup> and that “the theory of translation is essentially a theory of applied linguistics.”<sup>4</sup> In subsequent decades such statements came to be seen as incomplete: not exactly wrong but sorely lacking in definition and cultural context.

What subsequently arose was a defining period, roughly dated to around the early 1980s, and now called the 'cultural turn.' This refers to a movement across the social sciences to incorporate matters of socio-cultural convention, history and context in conjunction

with the development of cultural studies. Among translation scholars, it is understood as a change from a linguistic approach (one word/sentence = another word/sentence) to one that emphasises extra-textual factors and cross-cultural interaction.

This cultural turn saw a rejection of theories based on linguistic equivalence in favour of emphases on non-linguistic matters and on cross-cultural interaction. Theo Hermans has commented:

Translation used to be regarded primarily in terms of relations between texts, or between language systems. Today it is increasingly seen as a complex transaction taking place in a communicative, socio-cultural context. This requires that we bring the translator as a social being fully into the picture.<sup>5</sup>

Words are part of the process but no more: the process of translation is a transfer of culture and must be studied and acted upon in such measure. This was no sudden change: material from the 1980s onwards suggests a two decade long growing acceptance of such ideas. In some circles, it took longer to move away from the notion of translation as linguistic recoding. And of the groups working in translation, it is perhaps Bible translators who hold strongest to the linguistic models of the 1960s and 1970s. Why would that be? Are the cultural models in contemporary translation studies less applicable to Bible translation? Are the criticisms of linguistic equivalence less relevant for sacred texts? Has recent research in translation studies been neglected by Bible translators?

I have dealt with two of the above questions in other recent publications, arguing that Bible

3 J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1.

4 *Ibid.*, 19.

5 Theo Hermans, “Norms and the Determination of Translation: A Theoretical Framework,” in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, eds. Román Álvarez and María del Carmen-África Vidal, (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 26-51.

translators have neglected potentially useful research in 'secular' research and that cultural models of translation, particularly skopos theory, are highly relevant to Bible translation.<sup>6</sup> Those points won't be revisited here. The other question, however, on the applicability of linguistic equivalence to sacred texts, requires a rather longer answer and deserves the remainder of this paper for closer examination. Presented below are major concerns offered by critics of linguistic equivalence together with thoughts on their relevance for Bible translation.

### EQUIVALENCE IS IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFINE WITH PRECISION

One of the most common criticisms of equivalence is its definition, with the implication that an imprecise definition suggests a theoretically unsound concept. There is little debate that the term is used in different ways and is awkward to define. In a widely quoted example, Mary Snell-Hornby claimed to have identified fifty-eight different meanings attached to the term 'equivalence' in academic writings.<sup>7</sup> The precise number is sometimes contested but the basic argument stands: there is widespread inconsistency in terminology. Snell-Hornby later added that 'equivalence' has continued to become increasingly variable in definition, and particularly so since the 1980s when its definition becomes "increasingly approximative and vague to the point of complete insignificance."<sup>8</sup>

The counter argument to this is that even

6 See especially Andy Cheung, "Foreignising Bible Translation: Retaining Foreign Origins when Rendering Scripture", *Tyndale Bulletin* 63, no. 2 (2012): 257-73.

7 Mary Snell-Hornby, "Übersetzen, Sprache, Kultur," in *Übersetzungswissenschaft – Eine Neuorientierung*, ed. Mary Snell-Hornby, (Tübingen: Francke, 1986).

8 Mary Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1988), 21.

if equivalence is difficult to define, it should not necessarily be abandoned. Difficulty of definition does not necessarily equate to impossibility of existence. Indeed, equivalence in translation *must* exist at some level even if its theoretical status is hard to pin down. This is because somewhere, if only fleetingly, a translation *has* to equate to an original text, otherwise how can it be translation? This point was raised by Gideon Toury in his landmark descriptive analysis of translation practice, who argued that equivalence is a feature of all translations, irrespective of their linguistic or aesthetic qualities.<sup>9</sup> More recently, Anthony Pym has said that, "equivalence is artificial, fictive, something that has to be produced on the level of translation itself. But it *must* be produced" (emphasis original).<sup>10</sup> Even if the notion of equivalence is synthetic, or theoretically indefinable, it is difficult to study translation without acknowledging that at some level it is a notion central to the interaction between languages or cultures.

### EQUIVALENCE SHOULD BE SEEN AS ONE OF MANY POSSIBLE GOALS

This concern is related to the above where equivalence is criticised for representing too grand a vision of translation. While some criticise equivalence for being defined too broadly, here it is criticised for trying to do too much.

Skopos theorists such as Hans Vermeer prefer to restrict the meaning of equivalence so that it can be understood as viable and achievable

9 Gideon Toury, *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute, 1980), 63-70.

10 Anthony Pym, *Translation and Text Transfer: An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1992), 49.

in a narrow fashion.<sup>11</sup> For them, equivalence is where a translated text has exactly the same function as the source text, and is thus only one of many goals that translators may choose to attain. Only where both the source and the target text have the same function (or purpose) is there said to be equivalence; a condition also known as ‘functional constancy.’ Given that that such a scenario is unusual, equivalence is therefore rare and should not be presented as a common case, as Nord notes: “Functional equivalence between source and target text is not the ‘normal’ skopos of translation, but an exceptional case in which the factor ‘change of functions’ is assigned zero.”<sup>12</sup>

Not all would agree with this use of ‘functional equivalence,’ not even all functionalists. If there is already a term in existence to describe a state where source and target texts have the same function (i.e. functional constancy) why commandeer another term (i.e. functional equivalence) and redefine it as a synonym for the first? The best term for two texts sharing the same function is ‘functional constancy.’ Functional equivalence should then be reserved as an alternative, if unwise, synonym for dynamic equivalence.

### EQUIVALENCE ASSUMES THAT LANGUAGES EXHIBIT INTERCHANGEABLE SYMMETRY

There is great uncertainty about whether languages exhibit the kind of linguistic symmetry that is sometimes presupposed by equivalence theorists. Total equivalence

11 Hans J. Vermeer, *A Skopos Theory of Translation* (Some Arguments for and Against) (Heidelberg: TEXTconTEXT Verlag, 1996).

12 Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 26.

could only be demonstrated if invariable back translation can be demonstrated: that is, when Object A in the source text is invariably translated as Object B in the target text and can be unerringly reproduced vice versa.<sup>13</sup> This subjectivity of equivalence is ironically demonstrated by Snell-Hornby, who points out that the word equivalence itself is commonly used in a different way from *Äquivalenz* in respective English and German works on translation studies. She concludes that “the term equivalence ... presents an illusion of symmetry between languages which hardly exists beyond the level of vague approximations and which distorts the basic problems of translation.”<sup>14</sup> The counter response to this is that a good number of equivalence theories already account for the inability to achieve total equivalence, thus “Equivalence ... always implied the possibility of non-equivalence, of non-translation or a text that was in some way not fully translational.”<sup>15</sup>

Among Bible translators, Nida affirmed that total (or true) equivalence does not exist and encouraged instead that, “one must in translating seek to find the closest possible equivalent.”<sup>16</sup> The problem, however, remains that expressions such as “closest possible equivalent” remain somewhat difficult to define (cf. the previous criticism), and even in Nida’s own Chomsky-derived theoretical basis, he argued for the existence of universal, underlying and cross compatible structural

13 Andrew Chesterman, *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997), 9.

14 Mary Snell-Hornby, *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1988), 22.

15 Anthony Pym, “European translation studies, une science qui dérange, and why equivalence needn’t be a dirty word,” *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 8, no. 1 (1995): 164.

16 Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), 159.

features in languages. Therefore, at some level, there remains the view that there is always some kind of interchangeable symmetry and it is upon such a conclusion that critics pounce.

### THERE ARE MORE USABLE OR MORE EFFICIENT ALTERNATIVES TO EQUIVALENCE

This is an extension of the previous item where researchers complained that equivalence assumes an illusion of symmetry: that 'equal value' (equi-valence = equivalence) can be established between languages. As we saw, the counter argument would be that total equivalence is not necessarily expected: scholars such as Nida called for the closest possible equivalent of a linguistic object.

In response, it has been pointed out that such approximation is less helpful than alternative ways of describing translation that promise less in terms of one-to-one linguistic matching.<sup>17</sup> Here then, are commentators who argue not so much that equivalence is impossible but that it is impractical. Chesterman, for instance, claims that the notion of equivalence is 'inefficient', suggesting instead that translators aim for something like 'adequate similarity' because the demands on the translator are less burdensome:

We can also translate adequately without needing to believe in the illusion of total equivalence. Adequate similarity is enough – adequate for a given purpose in a given context. Indeed, anything more would be an inefficient use of resources.<sup>18</sup>

Chesterman's point is in regard to non-

religious texts, but the problem from the perspective of Bible translation is that target audience users may well hold suspicions about a Bible that is produced 'adequately' in order to save resources, since this may arouse suspicions over its faithfulness to the source text. This is one of the problems with translation theory: what works for some types of literature does not necessarily work for others. Chesterman is doubtless correct in certain circumstances, for one can imagine that certain types of writing (children's fiction for example) might be enthusiastically received if they are 'similar enough' and reflect an 'adequate translation', but translators and readers are likely to have more stringent expectations with regard to sacred texts.

### EQUIVALENCE DISCOUNTS THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TRANSLATION

This is one of the most significant criticisms of equivalence. The very history of equivalence-based methods of translation is the starting point: as noted already, equivalence was once the dominant idea underpinning linguistics-based translation theory in the 1960s and 1970s, but since then, translators have begun to think about their work in more interdisciplinary ways. To recap, the so-called cultural turn saw translation theorists view their work in terms of societal and cultural factors that coexisted with language and meaning. For theorists working primarily from the perspective of the target culture, equivalence is too narrow, positing translation as only a linguistic notion whereby translators' sole or central concern is with reproducing textual information from the source to the target text.

Let us now compare two highly cited

17 Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Discourse and the Translator* (London: Longman, 1990), 8.

18 Andrew Chesterman, "Where Is Similarity?" In *Similarity and Difference in Translation. Proceedings of the International Conference on Similarity and Translation*, edited by Stefano Arduini and Robert Hodgson (Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004), 74.

definitions of translation, one from Catford in the linguistics-dominated era of the 1960s, and a more recent one by Umberto Eco

Translation is “a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another.”<sup>19</sup>

Translation is always a shift, not between two languages but between two cultures or two encyclopaedias. A translator must take into account rules that are not strictly linguistic but, broadly speaking, cultural.<sup>20</sup>

The change, hopefully, is clear to see. The first quotation speaks of translation in textual terms; the second emphasises cultural shifts.

Importantly, however, it is not accurate to believe that equivalence theorists simply ignored or forgot about cultural factors, since that would be an unfair caricature. Indeed, Nida wrote extensively about the need to engage with target cultures in various works.<sup>21</sup> More accurately, it is not so much that Nida and others ignored cultural factors, but that they invariably assumed that target cultures always wanted one particular type of translation, in this case dynamic equivalence translation – typically readable, easy to understand versions. But this assumes that target culture readers cannot or will not appreciate other translations such as literal versions. Hans Vermeer, writing on the more restricted meaning of culture in the 1960s and 1970s, commented that:

‘Culture-sensitive translating’ needs further explanation. I do not have in mind a simple adaptation of the text to target-culture circumstances, definitely not in order to facilitate its reading ... I admit

19 J. C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 1.

20 Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 17.

21 For example, *Customs, Culture and Christianity* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), and *Religion Across Cultures: A Study in the Communication of Christian Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

such a procedure as a possible type of translating, but there are other cases too.<sup>22</sup>

His point is that translating with cultural concerns in mind is often thought to mean that translators must produce a text that is easily understood. But with his functionalist approach, Vermeer argued that, “skopos theory does not restrict translation strategies to just one or a few; it does not introduce any restrictions.”<sup>23</sup> So instead of mandating easy to read translation, skopos theory aims to produce a translation suitable for whatever purpose the target culture requires. A similar point has been made elsewhere:

As long as you are analysing modes of equivalence to the source, you are doing linguistics of one kind or another. But if you have to choose between one purpose and another ... linguistics will not be of much help to you. You are engaged in applied sociology, marketing, the ethics of communication, and a gamut of theoretical considerations that are only loosely held under the term “cultural studies.”<sup>24</sup>

The argument here is that equivalence is bound up primarily within a linguistic paradigm and does not sufficiently engage in cultural aspects of translation study. Many contemporary theorists prefer to understand translation within a larger context of intercultural transfer, and therefore its process must be bound, regulated and guided by the norms and conventions of the particular groups concerned. When one reads the works of equivalence theories from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, there tends to be comparatively less discussion about how translators operate in an intercultural context and how differing needs

22 Hans J. Vermeer, “Starting to Unask what Translatology is About,” *Target* 10, no. 1 (1998): 45.

23 *Ibid.*

24 Anthony Pym, *Exploring Translation Theories* (London: Routledge, 2010), 49

and expectations of target text readers should be met.

How should Bible translation be influenced by this? Much of the target-oriented cultural approach should sit well with Bible translation where the target text may be used for many different purposes: public reading, church preaching, private devotional, evangelistic work, and so on. In addition, target readers differ in understanding and experience in handling the biblical text: pastors and scholars may be well trained in exegesis and hermeneutics, while others may be newly embarking on personal Bible reading. All of this calls for different types of translation for different purposes, allowing the cultural norms and expectations of the readership to influence the form of the text, be it dynamic, literal, free, or interlinear.

But some caution is warranted due to the high status of the source text. It is likely that Bible readers, particularly evangelicals, will desire a text seen as 'faithful' or 'accurate' to the source text. As a genre, translated religious texts generally tend to be closer in style and substance to the source text compared with other types of literary works.

### EQUIVALENCE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DEVELOPMENTS IN POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

This is an extension of the above category and again relates to equivalence as principally about linguistic recoding. It deserves a separate section because postcolonial writers have reserved particular criticism for equivalence, and also because there is an ethical slant to the discussion, with which critics from the previous perspective may not necessarily agree. The postcolonial perspective views translation from the perspective of power relations and

considers there to be an inequality of status between source and target text, which reflects the unequal power relations found in colonial contexts. Sometimes, the very act of translation itself has been questioned as representing a form of cultural appropriation, in that it is seen as a collusive activity that reinforces the position of colonised cultures as subordinate to a superior power.

More commonly, the criticism takes aim at the notion of 'sameness' or equivalence between texts as too restrictive and incapable of fully describing the link between translation and empire:

The notion of fidelity to the "original" [i.e. of equivalence] holds back translation theory from thinking the force of a translation. The intimate links between, for example, translation from non-Western languages into English and the colonial hegemony they helped create are seldom examined.<sup>25</sup>

Here, equivalence is criticised for encouraging a notion of 'sameness' which is too restrictive, hampering postcolonial efforts to break free from dominant cultures in order to create and reshape literature and translations. Elsewhere, R. S. Sugirtharajah has criticised English Bible translations for being too restrictive in their use of language: "What we aim for is a version of the Bible which will take into account the postcolonial English and mobilise it radically to rewrite the text, to soak it with new angles and new perspectives."<sup>26</sup> This is set expressly against equivalence which is unsuited to postcolonial perspectives:

Translation in a postcolonial context is

25 Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 58.

26 Rasiah S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 95

not merely seeking dynamic equivalence or aiming for linguistic exactness, but desires to rewrite and retranslate the texts, as well as concepts against the grain. Rewriting and retranslating are not a simple dependence upon the past, but a radical remolding of the text to meet new situations and demands.<sup>27</sup>

But significant widening of the range of Bible versions to include radical rewriting of its contents will likely prove problematic among most Bible readers who tend to expect a high degree of resemblance (indeed, 'equivalence', however that is defined) with the source text. Postcolonial perspectives, though widespread in the scholarly community, may not be so popular among the general Bible reading public: it is questionable if such Bibles would be commercially viable, especially among those aimed at evangelicals.

Nevertheless, postcolonial studies have brought some necessary insight into practical problems of Bible translation. Vicente Rafael noted that the 1610 Tagalog Bible produced by Spanish missionaries in the Philippines, was infused with Latin language. Rafael argued that the Spanish translators' introduction of Latin words for key theological terms and concepts acted as a controlling influence because understanding of Latin was necessary for full appreciation of the Bible. At the same time, the usage of Latin terms implied that the Tagalog language was incapable of carrying the full meaning of sacred Christian terms.<sup>28</sup> This contrasts with, for example, the work of William Tyndale who invented new English words such as 'atonement' and 'scapegoat', rather than reuse Latin or Greek terms. The neologisms

27 *Ibid.*, 96-7.

28 Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

themselves soon became a normal part of English.

Overall, postcolonial viewpoints have generated many important insights into translation theory, but such views have attracted criticism of their own. Munday has pointed out that postcolonial writers themselves will inevitably hold political agendas: "The promotion of such translation policies, even though it is from the perspective of the 'minority' cultures, still involves a political act and manipulation of translation for specific political or economic advantage."<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to agree that translation must always be produced according to postcolonial ideologies, since this would assume that all readers desire translations that are moulded and written with postcolonial ideology in mind. This is especially the case given the evident success of both dynamic and formal equivalence Bible translations throughout the former colonies. For evangelicals, with a 'high view' of scripture, it is unlikely that postcolonial viewpoints will gain much ground in Bible translation activity.

#### EQUIVALENCE ELEVATES THE SOURCE TEXT TOO HIGHLY

As seen already, the cultural turn saw a fresh emphasis on the target text and target readers thereby opposing the source-text oriented focus of equivalence and linguistic approaches. Since evangelicals hold a 'high view' of scripture, to what extent does this criticism apply to target readers who expect fidelity and faithfulness to the source text? First, to the criticism itself: it appears partly through the emergence of the so-called 'descriptive branch' of translation studies (which seeks to describe and define

29 Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 134.



the field) and partly through the emergence of functionalism (which argues that the needs of the target audience should shape the translation). Scholars working from both perspectives seek to consider translation from the perspective of the target text culture, an activity that sits well with the 'cultural turn.' Since equivalence based theories seek first to establish some kind of 'equal value' with the source text, the function of the translated text in the target community is therefore of a lower rank of importance. Toury, the most prominent figure in the descriptive branch of translation theory, has said that:

Translating ... is to a large extent conditioned by the goals it is designed to serve, and these goals are set in, and by, the prospective receptor system(s). Consequently, translators operate first and foremost in the interest of the culture into which they are translating, and not in the interest of the source text, let alone the source culture.<sup>30</sup>

All well and good for many text types, be they novels, poetry, student textbooks or business reports, for the theory is here applied to translation of all sorts. But Bible translation is rather different – to regard religious source texts as superior is no bad thing, and it would be difficult to imagine many situations where the target audience would expect otherwise. The idea of altering a sacred text in pursuit of some perceived target audience goal would ordinarily be rejected by most translators. Of course, Toury is not talking specifically about the high status of sacred religious texts; his comment about the source text being superior concerns the starting point or the most important factor in translation, but both of these naturally incorporate thoughts about the perceived venerated status of the source text. At least as far as Bible translation is

concerned, most functionalists would probably agree that the source text remains superior, *but only because the target audience expects it, and not because an equivalence theory demands it.*

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The relevance of equivalence to Bible translation is not a simple consideration. First, there are concerns about its very definition but an exact and consistent definition is perhaps mostly unnecessary. Translation Studies has gotten this far already without ever finding agreement on its precise meaning. In general terms, there is broad agreement: that equivalence relates to the relationship between a source and target text. That is perhaps enough and all that can be achieved – what then of its practical usage?

In Bible translation, the usefulness of equivalence, including Nida's prominent notion of dynamic equivalence, is mixed. There are multiple uses of Bibles: for preaching, for personal devotion, children's work, evangelistic purposes, serious exegetical study, liturgy and worship. Different versions for different functions exist, be they easy to read, or literal or somewhere between. In some cases, an equivalence-based option such as dynamic equivalence is viable, but not in all cases, contra Nida. That is where functionalist approaches, which advocate different types of translation for different purposes depending on reader needs, offer a useful alternative to equivalence.

Therefore, some aspects of the cultural turn are useful, particularly the idea that the role of the target text is elevated. On the other hand, some caution may need to be exercised with such target text oriented translation. Compared to other literature types, Bible translations ordinarily exhibit close fidelity to the source text, but this should be seen as fully in line with

30 Gideon Toury, "A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies" *Dispositio* 7 (1982): 23-39.

functionalist approaches: it is not an equivalence-based theory that is advocating adherence to the source text but expectations of target readers, which is a key perspective of the cultural turn. Apart from a minority, for example those taking a postcolonial perspective, the majority of Bible readers will expect translations to be faithful to the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. This could be seen as a partial continuation of the success of equivalence but more accurately, it is an example of the usefulness of functionalist approaches in enabling translation to suit the purpose of the target text.

### Bibliography

- Álvarez, Román and María del Carmen-África Vidal (eds). *Translation, Power, Subversion*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996.
- Arduini, Stefano and Robert Hodgson (eds). *Similarity and Difference in Translation. Proceedings of the International Conference on Similarity and Translation*. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004.
- Catford, J. C. *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Chesterman, Andrew. *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997.
- Chesterman, Andrew. "Where Is Similarity?" In *Similarity and Difference in Translation. Proceedings of the International Conference on Similarity and Translation*, edited by Stefano Arduini and Robert Hodgson, 74. Rimini: Guaraldi, 2004.
- Cheung, Andy. "Foreignising Bible Translation: Retaining Foreign Origins when Rendering Scripture." *Tyndale Bulletin* 63, no. 2 (2012): 257-73.
- Cheung, Andy. "A History of Twentieth Century Translation Theory and Its Application for Bible Translation." *Journal of Translation* 9, no. 1 (2013).
- Eco, Umberto. *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003.
- Hatim, Basil and Ian Mason. *Discourse and the Translator*. London: Longman, 1990.
- Hermans, Theo. "Norms and the Determination of Translation: A Theoretical Framework," in *Translation, Power, Subversion*, edited by Román Álvarez and María del Carmen-África Vidal, 26-51. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1996.
- MacLochlainn, Scott. "Divinely Generic: Bible Translation and the Semiotics of Circulation." *Signs and Society* 3, no. 2 (2015): 234-260.
- Munday, Jeremy. *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Nida, Eugene A. *Customs, Culture and Christianity*. London: Tyndale Press, 1963.
- Nida, Eugene A. *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*. Leiden: Brill, 1964.
- Nida, Eugene A. *Religion Across Cultures: A Study in the Communication of Christian Faith*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Nirañjana, Tejaswini. *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Nord, Christiane. *Text Analysis in Translation: Theory, Methodology and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991.

- Pym, Anthony. *Translation and Text Transfer: An Essay on the Principles of Intercultural Communication*. Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1992.
- Pym, Anthony. "European translation studies, une science qui dérange, and why equivalence needn't be a dirty word." *Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction* 8, no. 1 (1995): 153-76.
- Pym, Anthony. *Exploring Translation Theories*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Rafael, Vicente L. *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Sugirtharajah, Rasiah S. *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism: Contesting the Interpretations*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Snell-Hornby, Mary. "Übersetzen, Sprache, Kultur," in *Übersetzungswissenschaft – Eine Neuorientierung*, edited by Mary Snell-Hornby, 9-29. Tübingen: Francke, 1986.
- Snell-Hornby, Mary (ed.). *Übersetzungswissenschaft – Eine Neuorientierung*. Tübingen: Francke, 1986.
- Snell-Hornby, Mary. *Translation Studies: An Integrated Approach*. Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 1988.
- Toury, Gideon. *In Search of a Theory of Translation*. Tel Aviv: Porter Institute, 1980.
- Toury, Gideon. "A Rationale for Descriptive Translation Studies." *Dispositio* 7 (1982): 23-39.
- Vermeer, Hans J. *A Skopos Theory of Translation (Some Arguments for and Against)*. Heidelberg: TEXTconTEXT Verlag, 1996.
- Vermeer, Hans J. "Starting to Unask what Translatology is About." *Target* 10, no. 1 (1998): 41-68.

### **Andy Cheung**

*Dr Andy Cheung is the Director of Operations at King's Evangelical Divinity School, UK, where he has taught courses in New Testament Studies and Biblical Languages. His PhD (Birmingham, 2012) was titled Functionalism and Foreignisation: Applying Skopos Theory to Bible Translation, with particular interest in the Letter to the Romans. His research interests have predominantly been in descriptive translation studies, particularly in mapping purposes (skopoi) for Bible translations. He is currently undertaking research into relay translation, looking particularly at the development of Bibles with English as a mediating language.*

