THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE AMONG INDIGENOUS ISLAMIC PEOPLES USING A MEDIATING APPROACH

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by

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APPROVAL SHEET

THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE AMONG
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Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

(Ps 119:105)

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PREFACE

As I listened to my Christian friend, I could not believe what he said. He had come to faith many years earlier yet was still speaking like a Muslim. He told me how his faith was strong, and he was sure God would save him due to his virtuous deeds. I immediately countered that we are saved by grace, through faith, not by our good deeds. His reply shocked me as he said, "It seems that we have different definitions of the word grace." At the time, I was unsure how to reply. This paper seeks to express the thoughts he inspired within me.

I am thankful to this friend for boldly stating his thoughts. I, along with other colleagues, wondered why we seemed to have so much misunderstanding when using spiritual vocabulary, that is, key biblical terms, among professing believers. This conversation pushed me to ask both Christians and Muslims about words and ideas from the Bible.

I am thankful to my parents for teaching me Scripture at an early age. Both of them demonstrated Christ at home, at church, at work, and in the community. Before we went to school, my mother would lead us in a devotional. I am thankful to my children, all of whom read through my dissertation at points and gave their thoughts which helped me clarify my ideas. Thanks to my daughter who spent an enormous amount of time reading the entire paper, assisting me to express my ideas clearly and concisely.

I am thankful for so many colleagues whose names cannot appear here due to security concerns—brothers and sisters who love the Lord and have spent their lives in service to this indigenous people that they might know Christ. They have worked as evangelists, leaders in discipleship, and humanitarian projects. They have prayed fervently for the lost and continue to do so. May they all see a great harvest.

I am grateful to the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, for the instruction and guidance I have received. They are not only teachers but practitioners as well. Their knowledge did not stop at the door as we left class; instead, it has been used in numerous ways worldwide to make disciples of the nations.

There is no one to whom I am more thankful than my wife. Over the past four years, she has read nearly all my textbooks to me, many times falling asleep in exhaustion while doing so. She has tirelessly worked beside me and has given up countless hours for this educational experience to happen. I cannot thank her enough.

Finally, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I remember that night in my car when He spoke to me. I see how He radically changed me, our marriage, and our family. He has blessed us with four wonderful children and the opportunity to see their children. I thank Him for the abundant life He began in me and the promise that He will complete it in His time.

Name Withheld

Louisville, Kentucky
May 2023

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2002, my supervisor approached me and asked if I would consider working on a translation project in an indigenous language in North Africa. He did not know Bible translation had been my dream since my salvation. The need was colossal, with an essentially unreached indigenous group of more than three million people deeply entrenched in Islamic religion and culture. Before arriving on the mission field, I had studied Hebrew and Greek at seminary. Those years were indeed preparatory for the task ahead. However, my studies had only partially equipped me for the challenge. While the study of the biblical languages and cultures was critical for Bible translation, learning the new target language and culture were essential tasks as well.

Vast resources are available to learn Hebrew and Greek for the English speaker. Additionally, theologians have written volumes on Old and New Testament life and culture. Furthermore, beyond the books that I could find, many computer programs assist students and scholars in translating *from* the biblical languages.

However, as I began to seek out local translators and study the indigenous language, I realized that no books or resources on Bible translation *into* their language existed. I had several crucial decisions to make. First, the team needed to decide the intended audience. Second, I needed to decide whether to translate into an academic language, a language of the common person, or somewhere in between. Third, I needed to determine whether to translate the form or the meaning.[1] As I asked the two men who

[1] Several authors present translation models demonstrating this type of spectrum whereas the terminology has changed over the years. Beekman and Callow use the terms *Highly Literal* and *Unduly Free*. John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974), 21.

began to work with me for their explanations of religious terms, I was met with empty stares or given blanket definitions from Islam. They claimed to be believers yet had no Bible in the Tamazight language (thus the necessity of the task), no pastor to help them, and no church to attend. Additionally, no resources were available in this indigenous language or the local Arabic. Furthermore, none of the few indigenous believers possessed any knowledge of biblical languages and had only Islamic understandings of any of the religious words.

Overall, the task of Bible translation was much larger than transferring words from one language to another.[2] The fundamental aim for this translation team was to transfer ideas from a language and culture that existed more than 2,000–3,000 years ago into their own native language. Yet for me, this task included the challenge of transferring God's message into a language and culture of today that was not my own. This commission was quite the undertaking, and the Holy Spirit would need to enlighten our fledgling team if this task was to be a success.

Grudem uses the terms *Essentially Literal* and *Very Paraphrastic*. Wayne Grudem, "Are Only *Some* Words of Scripture Breathed Out by God? Why Plenary Inspiration Favors 'Essentially Literal' Bible Translation," in *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation*, by C. John Collins et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 22. Fee and Strauss use the terms *Formal Equivalent* and *Functional Equivalent*. Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 28. All these authors come to different conclusions as to where a translation should land on the spectrum.

[2] Eugene A. Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1974). See especially chap. 6, "Transfer," where Nida discusses common hindrances that may occur in the transfer of information, both by the translator and the reader. For the translator, a major challenge is to remember when he/she did not have a high level of biblical literacy and to translate according to the audience's knowledge base. Difficult renderings of the text are better understood by someone well-versed in the Scriptures. However, readers who have not studied the text in depth might find it challenging to grasp the meaning. Additionally, Nida emphasizes the need to look beyond only the word level of a passage and to see the bigger picture of the paragraph or the entire discourse. Furthermore, in the transfer process, Nida believes that an overemphasis on form leads to significant loss and modification to the meaning of the text.

At times, the Old Testament translation project seemed to move ahead at a good pace, especially when working on narrative passages. At other times, the work slowed and became stagnant with words and their particular meanings. Most often, it was our *key biblical terms* that caused the most problems.[3] Their indigenous Berber culture was remarkably similar to that of the Old Testament stories we were translating. For example, today, community decisions are more important than individual choices. Family honor is still a vital part of their society. These men should have grasped these types of ideas far better than I could have. However, they were comprehending these terms differently than I understood them. When they heard the words, such as grace or mercy, it was as if they were filtering the words through an Islamic worldview. No matter how many times the team discussed the biblical meaning of words, these national believers seemed to hear them within their Islamic framework.

Twenty years have passed since I agreed to begin this indigenous translation project among the Berbers of North Africa. I have had the privilege of working with more than ten different translators, gathered together in various groups. Throughout the process, certain individuals have taught me how proud they are of their native language and the tremendous tool this language can be to reach their people for Christ. With the help of these national translators, I can now present to subsequent laborers both tools and suggestions that can assist the work among other indigenous People Groups (PGs).

While the Lord has worked among this PG, many of the original obstacles from the early days still remain. There currently exists no strong church, few pastors who

[3] I will frequently refer to key biblical terms throughout this dissertation. These terms are words or phrases that hold the most important theological ideas of the Scriptures (i.e., cross, sin, grace, salvation, or God). In stating this, I in no way deny the verbal plenary inspiration of the *entire* Bible. However, Bible translators around the world and over the centuries have wrestled with these same difficult concepts; each language presents its own challenges with specific key biblical terms.

understand the Word, and only a few resources in the indigenous languages or the local Arabic. Vast distances between many believers must be traveled and Islam still dominates the worldview with less than one tenth of one percent professing Christ.[4] On a good note, a few things have changed. First, the Old Testament has a substantial number of narratives available, and the New Testament is now complete in Tamazight. With these texts completed, several Bible-based films are available.[5] Furthermore, radio broadcasts are attempting to explain the Bible while a new television broadcast from southern Europe is hoping to reach across the Mediterranean Sea with programs of inspiration and discipleship. The most encouraging news of all is that more than one hundred men, women, and children have trusted in Christ as their Savior, which means that the Holy Spirit is working in and through them.

Nevertheless, many misunderstandings of key biblical terms continue today. In discussions with other foreign translators over the years, I have heard varied opinions on how best to do the task. Some have suggested that my team translate the text word-for-word and allow the Holy Spirit and local pastors to explain the text. Several of my missionary colleagues reminded me that the translator's job is to translate, not to teach. However, few local pastors in much of the region understand the text deeply. One must travel great distances for discipleship. Furthermore, upon arrival, their presence can cause tremendous pressure by the local authorities or family members as to why they are meeting with each other. Therefore, a translation in the local language which can be easily understood is a great tool for both evangelism and discipleship.

On the other extreme were those who advocated heavy use of Islamic idioms as nationals would understand these terms better. However, when our team attempted to

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[4] Joshua Project, "Berber, Imazighen," 2022, https://joshuaproject.net/peoplegroups/12217.

[5] For access to these films and many other materials, see "Tamazight Info," accessed February 25, 2022, https://tamazight.info/en/home/.

use this type of wording, it became evident in testing that the text was not communicating clearly, often leading to long discussions of meaning. Furthermore, the testers felt that this method blurred certain Christian meanings while reinforcing Islamic beliefs. Therefore, the team realized that both extremes led to miscommunication and that a mediating, or middle-ground, approach was most appropriate in their language. Over the years, I developed a rubric which helped the translation team to better achieve the goal of a mediating approach.

Research Question

The Bible translator for indigenous people under Islamic influence must walk a fine line or the text will lead to many misunderstandings. A vital component of the work is conveying the meaning of key biblical terms, such as grace, sin, and holiness. If the translation teams translate too formally, they risk communicating zero meaning, little meaning, or even a wrong meaning.[6] If the text uses too many Islamic idioms, the translators may blur the Christian message and reinforce Muslim beliefs. How, then, can Bible translators better communicate key biblical terms to indigenous non-Arabic speaking peoples, highly influenced by Islam?

Thesis

In this dissertation, I argue that translators among indigenous non-Arabic speaking, Islamic peoples should translate the first Bible into their language using a mediating approach. I create a rubric that assists translators in determining where their translation falls on a spectrum. This tool will allow translators to abstain from using language that may be technically consistent with the original language yet communicates

[6] The word *formally* here refers to formal equivalence. A formal translation follows closely to the form of the language from which one is translating. On the opposite end of a spectrum, a functional translation seeks to bring across the meaning of the original while preferring the grammar and structure of the target language, the language into which one is translating.

zero meaning, little meaning, or the wrong meaning. This decision will also avoid a Bible translation that uses Islamic idioms, which can lead to profound misunderstandings.

Methodology

First, I present current developments in church planting in my local context in North Africa, as these developments are pertinent to my argument. I look at the number of believers, state of churches, pastors, resources available in Tamazight, literacy rates, and those believers who read biblical languages. I briefly analyze the linguistic phenomenon that exists in my country with its multi-layered language structure.[7] These multiple language layers have produced a language hierarchy in which words in one language can override words in another. Translation teams evaluate all this information so they can better understand the audience for whom they are translating.

Second, I present a brief history and subsequently an overview of English Bibles, such as an essentially literal version, highly paraphrastic versions, and mediating approaches.[8] I introduce several theories behind these translations, observing the strengths and weaknesses of each.[9] I then evaluate multiple authors' examples of Bible translation spectrums: Grudem, Beekman and Callow, Carson, and Brunn.[10]

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[7] Here I utilize an ethnographic paper I wrote in 2019. The title has been changed for discretion. "M. A. B. of Country X: An Ethnography" (unpublished paper, course 98525, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019). A crucial aspect of language in my country is how religious language is exalted yet misunderstood by a sizable portion of the population. The local languages spoken in the home are often derided as less valuable than qur'anic Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, French, Spanish, or English.

[8] These specific terms used to describe types of translations can be found in the following books: Collins et al., *Translating Truth*; D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

[9] Several authors admit that while each translation may have its strength, it may also not be applicable for every situation or for every believer. For more info see Glen G. Scorgie, Mark M. Strauss, and Steven M. Voth, *The Challenge of Bible Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003); Nida and Taber, *Theory and Practice of Translation*.

[10] Many authors have created their own Bible Translation spectrum. The following books provide examples, each with its own terminology. Collins et al., *Translating Truth*; Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*; Carson, *The King James Version Debate*; Dave Brunn, *One Bible, Many*

Third, I assess several contextualization models of David Hesselgrave to determine their application in an indigenous setting.[11] When translators attempt to follow a word-for-word model, they must avoid importing their own culture into the text. Similarly, in a highly idiomatic version, translators must be careful not to reinforce Islamic culture. Furthermore, I seek to apply Ernst-August Gutt's theory of relevance to the idea of Bible translation among indigenous, Islamic people.[12] According to Gutt, the challenge lies beyond simply encoding and decoding the text.[13]

Fourth, I will create a new model in which I combine John Travis's model of Church Planting work using his C1–C5 spectrum[14] with the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (UBSGNT) grading of variants, A–D.[15] The model will be a rubric where I demonstrate how to assess key biblical terms, which is critical for four reasons: (1) This tool will allow for objectivity as to where the translation should be placed on a spectrum. The importance here lies in understanding if the Tamazight translation team has met its goal of word-for-word, idiomatic, or a mediating approach. (2) In many minority language translations, this decision is often determined subjectively by the team, a committee, or a translation consultant looking at the text. With this new rubric, teams can more objectively determine the location on the spectrum by testing native speakers,

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Versions (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

[11] David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989).

[12] Ernst-August Gutt, *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation* (Dallas: Summer Institute of Linguistics [Academic], 1992).

[13] Gutt, *Relevance Theory*, 20.

[14] Mark S. Williams, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (July 1996): 304–10.

[15] The UBS GNT uses a grading scale (A-D) for confidence in variance. This scale is based on committee members understanding of each variant. My new model will include input from national testers which should be more objective. For further reading on this variant scale, see Kent D. Clarke, "Textual Certainty in the United Bible Societies' 'Greek New Testament,'" *Novum Testamentum* 44, no. 2 (2002): 105–33.

including both Muslims and Muslim Background Believers. (3) Subsequent translators can avoid duplication of Bibles. (4) Testers mark misunderstood key biblical terms with lower scores which then can receive more attention in future work.

Fifth, I use several Tamazight key biblical terms to examine and evaluate the spectrum introduced in chapter 4. Each key biblical term is tested and given an A–D grade depending on its understanding by both Muslims and Muslim Background Believers. The grading results become much more objective as they are determined by native speakers hearing the text, possibly for the first time. Words receiving C or D can be reevaluated and changed, as necessary. The final goal is to receive the highest scores possible with these words.

Knowing where the translation lands can help teams make their translations available for a specific reason. For example, if teams desires to make a word-for-word translation for pastors, it is critical to know if they have achieved their goal. Additionally, a Bible for youth may need much simpler words and a more limited vocabulary. The rubric can help teams achieve their aims.

The knowledge of location on the translation spectrum can help subsequent translation teams avoid duplication. If the first translation is a mediating approach, the team may decide to make a more idiomatic or more word-for-word translation, depending on the need. Repeating the same type of project is both costly and unnecessary.

Key biblical terms marked with low scores can receive closer attention for future updates and better educational opportunities. Correctly understood terms can receive an A–B mark and therefore be given less attention. Conversely, misunderstood scores receive a C–D mark and can receive further attention in subsequent research. As Christianity grows among the Berbers, these terms may achieve higher marks as the community begins to hear them in a new context.

Summary of Research

In *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation*, five prominent scholars present the premise that the best translations available in English are those that are essentially literal.[16] The essays begin with Wayne Grudem, who introduces a Translation Spectrum, which the authors use throughout the book. These men propose that translators who do not work towards essentially literal translations tend to be unfaithful to the original text. Other contributing authors are C. John Collins, Leland Ryken, Vern S. Poythress, and Bruce Winter.

D. A. Carson's book *The King James Debate: A Plea for Realism* examines the argument from a viewpoint of the textual critic, focusing on early manuscripts and text-types.[17] Carson does not accuse the King James Version (KJV) of being a poor translation but instead calls into question those who claim it is the best way, or only way, to translate. He demonstrates how idiomatic versions can be extremely useful and, at times, are more accurate than word-for-word translations. Carson desires that Bibles communicate meaning more than duplicate form.

In his work *One Bible, Many Versions*, Dave Brunn advocates for the use of multiple translations.[18] Furthermore, every translation may serve a different purpose, and all these different versions may complement each other. Brunn does not see one translation as sufficient in itself; instead, they are each tools designed for a specific need. The author provides examples of formal equivalent and functional equivalent versions, seeing the benefits of both.

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[16] Collins et al., *Translating Truth*, 16.

[17] Carson, *The King James Version Debate*.

[18] Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions*, 45.

Eugene Nida's work *The Theory and Practice of Translation* focuses on a critical aspect of translation, bringing the message of the Bible to modern readers.[19] Nida introduced the concepts of *dynamic equivalence* and *formal equivalence correspondence*, understanding that no translation achieves complete literalness. Formal equivalence correspondence seeks to replicate the form of the original language into the receptor language, even the grammar, syntax, and structure. Accuracy in these areas is vital for those who follow this theory. For dynamic equivalence texts, the audience's understanding becomes the focus. A critical aspect is that the text impacts the modern reader like the original reader would have been affected. If this is the case, names and details of ancient culture may need to be made explicit. However, as Nida notes, "A translation which insists on rendering the Greek [or Hebrew] literally . . . is simply violating the meaning for the sake of preserving a formal grammatical correspondence."[20] In this sense, a failure to translate the meaning is a failure to translate. Nida aims to transfer the correct information in the translation process, yet he does not offer a rubric in his testing procedure.

Ernst Wendland explores four fields in his paper, "Exploring the Continuum of Modern Bible Translating: A Comparative Overview of Motives, Methods, Media, and Models."[21] First, Wendland looks at the theories of translation by the practitioners who seek a specific purpose for their Bible, such as a Literalist Bible or a Functionalist Bible. This tool looks beyond form and meaning and adds goals such as genre type and relevance. Second, the methods section explores transmitting the message and how the

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[19] Nida and Taber, *Theory and Practice of Translation*.

[20] Nida and Taber, *Theory and Practice of Translation*, 2.

[21] Ernst Wendland, "Exploring the Continuum of Modern Bible Translating: A Comparative Overview of Motives, Methods, Media, and Models," unpublished paper, April 2021, https://www.academia.edu/44360360/EXPLORING_THE_CONTINUUM_OF_MODERN_BIBLE_TRANSLATING_A_Comparative_Overview_of_Motives_Methods_Media_and_Models_version_2.

team works to bring about that communication. Relevance and function, among others, play critical roles in this process. Here one asks, "For whom and what purpose is the translation?" The final product ends up as a "type, target, and a tactic."[22] Third, the media looks at how the team will present the Scriptures. The text may appear in book form, audio, dramatic video, or even multimodal. Each medium can aid or distract, depending on the target audience. Fourth, the translation models explore how the local language may fully express the completeness of the Source Language (SL) and the richness of the Target Language (TL). Wendland admits the difficulty of this goal, yet continues to strive towards it.

Ernst-August Gutt presents a series of lectures in which he takes the work of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*, and moves the study towards the field of Bible translation.[23] Gutt believes that effective language involves much more than encoding and decoding. Context and inference play key roles in the transference of information.

Significance

Bible translators working among the Berbers of North Africa have far fewer tools available than those working in English, Spanish, or French. Furthermore, security issues make their task even more challenging. The charts and suggestions I present may help them more objectively locate where their translation falls on a spectrum. This approach allows translators to recognize if they have attained their goal of a mediating translation or helps them assess where adjustments are needed. Furthermore, subsequent translators may see published work and strive for another type of translation, either more idiomatic or word-for-word, depending on the need. Problematic key biblical terms can

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[22] Wendland, "Exploring Continuum of Modern Bible Translating," 14.

[23] Gutt, *Relevance Theory*.

easily be identified and targeted. Other suggestions mentioned could help national translators see the richness of their language and fully tap into their knowledge.

Argument

The use of a mediating translation as a first Bible among indigenous people may help avoid misunderstandings. On the one side, word-for-word translations may demonstrate the grammar and structure of the original language yet leave readers confused, getting the wrong meaning, or getting no meaning at all. On the other side, translations that remove cultural data while using too many Islamic idioms may blur meaning or reinforce Islamic beliefs. I further advocate for multiple types of translations used in cooperation rather than in competition with one another.

Current Assessment of the Language Hierarchy in Morocco

As of 2007, the Moroccan government estimates the total Berber population to be nearly twenty million people. There are three main PGs within this number: Rifi Berbers in the northern Rif mountains, Middle Atlas Berbers (MABs) in the Middle Atlas Mountains, and Sousi Berbers further south in the High Atlas Mountains. This figure numbers all three Berber groups between 40 to 50 percent of the total population, possibly as high as 60 percent. The Rifi and Sousi Berbers's languages are classified into two main dialects; native ears can quickly identify where the speaker calls home. These languages are called Tarifit and Tachelhyt, respectively.

Middle Atlas Berbers Today

The majority PG living in and around the Middle Atlas Mountains of Central Morocco are the MABs. They call the name of the language they speak *Tamazight*. With modern transportation readily available, these population details are generalizations, as people have migrated and integrated significantly.

The MABs are the smallest of the three Berber groups, numbering approximately 3–4 million, yet the Tamazight language may have as many as twenty dialects. Due to their geographic proximity, the languages of the Sousi Berbers and MABs are relatively similar. Edward Westermarck notes that from the early 1900s, "There is, however, no sharp line of demarcation between the dialects of the southern and central Berbers, as there is no very definite geographical border between those people: whereas the dialectic differences inside the latter group may be quite considerable."[24] This assessment remains true today. As one travels within these two PGs, from south to north, the Tachelhyt begins to blend into Tamazight, and the languages become highly intermingled.

Although more than 100 years have passed since Westermarck wrote about life in Central Morocco, much of what he noted remains, particularly concerning attitudes of superiority and dominance by the Arabs. He asserts, "Although Arabic is spoken over a much smaller area of the country than Berber, it is nevertheless the dominant language, being that of the government and administration, the religious creed, and the higher culture. Berber is despised as a barbarous jargon."[25] The posture towards Berbers and their language has changed somewhat, yet instances of supremacy still exist. For example, in 1981, Hassan Id Balkassm, who now presides on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, was jailed for one week for putting a sign up in his law office in Tamazight.[26] As recently as the 1990s, it was illegal in some places even to speak the Berber language in public. Within the past ten years, I observed a policeman pull over a man for a traffic violation. The man was not compliant and, in his frustration,

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[24] Edward Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1968), 2–3.

[25] Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, 4.

[26] Emma Schwartz, "Morocco's Berbers Reclaim Their Language and Their Indigenous Culture," *US News & World Report*, March 13, 2008, www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2008/03/13/moroccos-berbers-reclaim-their-language-and-their-indigenous-culture-.

began to speak in Tamazight with the law officer. The policeman strictly forbade the man from speaking Tamazight, and instructed the man only to address him in Arabic. Quite often, feelings run strong in situations concerning hegemony and the use of a particular tongue in Morocco.

Language Hierarchy

Today, in Morocco, a curious linguistic phenomenon exists, which I call a language hierarchy. I present here what I have observed over two decades. Furthermore, many native speakers of these languages have confirmed these observations.

The form of Arabic that Moroccans speak is not the same language that one hears in many parts of the Middle East, often referred to as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA). Instead, the local Arabic spoken in Morocco is called *Darija*, meaning dialect. The differences between MSA and *Darija* are quite astounding, and often, Arabic speakers from the Middle East can scarcely communicate with Moroccans unless both have studied MSA. For Moroccans, though, their form of Arabic is what they have grown up speaking, and it is their national language.[27] Nevertheless, what I have observed is that

[27] An interesting commonality throughout the Arab world is that every country has its own *Darija*, or dialect. However, Morocco's history has played a significant role in shaping their language. The population before Islam arrived was Berber, of Phoenician descent, who had lived there for generations. When the Arabs arrived, the Arabic that was spoken quickly mixed with the Berber (Punic) languages with both being heavily affected by the other. These languages have lived alongside each other for more than 1,200 years, with Arabic being the language of religion, government, and culture. The Arab conquerors continued their religious wars into Spain and France, settling in the former for more than 600 years. In 1492, the Moors were expelled from Spain and returned across the Strait of Gibraltar, yet their Arabic language had been heavily influenced by the many languages that had existed in Spain during their time of hegemony. Later, in the 1500s, the Spanish arrived on the northern coast of Morocco and annexed two enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, which are still considered Spanish sovereign land today. With the powerful Spanish on African soil, people using these languages passed words back and forth, highly influencing one another. The 1900s saw two World Wars and colonization from two separate nations. France took control of Morocco as a French territory in 1912, and had mastery over the land until 1956. The effect that the French language had on Moroccan Arabic cannot be overstated. For more information see Rachel Salia, "Between Arabic and French Lies the Dialect" (BA thesis, Columbia University, 2011).

In the southern half of Morocco, Spain took control in 1884 and controlled the Sahara for nearly 100 years, under different statuses, finally relinquishing the large province in 1976. Spanish influence during this century on Moroccan *Darija* has added to the distinct differences of the Arabic language which is spoken in the Middle East. For further reading on both French and Spanish influence on the languages of Morocco, see Mayra C. Daniel and Alexis Ball, "Contextualizing Multilingualism in Morocco," 2009, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1062642.pdf.

many Moroccans do not have a very high view of their language, themselves often referring to it as a street language. Middle Easterners can reinforce this idea as they often comment that Moroccans do not speak Arabic. Furthermore, *Darija* is not the same language one finds in the Qur'an, often referred to as qur'anic Arabic.

Qur'anic Arabic commands high respect from Muslims worldwide as they believe it to be the language in which God spoke to Muhammad in the seventh century.[28] Today, this language is used by millions of Muslims globally as they recite or read the Qur'an. In some Islamic countries, certain individuals have memorized large portions or even the entire Qur'an and yet do not speak Arabic, nor even understand what they have memorized. However, even for Muslims who have not put the Qur'an to heart, this revered text is the language of religion, whether or not Arabic is their mother tongue.

The MSA spoken in many parts of the Arab world is a more modern form of Classical Arabic. Also referred to as Fous'ha, MSA finds its roots in the Qur'an. A comparison with English is that MSA is the "Oxford English" of the Arab world. A language of the highly educated, MSA is typically not used in homes among family members. Instead, one finds its usage on TV and radio, or in written form in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Furthermore, children often receive their education in MSA from grades K–12. In Morocco, this deeply respected form of Arabic may be referred to as "the language." Many government offices conduct their business in MSA and expect their workers to speak, read, and write in it, at least to some degree. Only a small minority of Moroccan citizens command a full usage of MSA.

In summary, there are three forms of Arabic found in Morocco. First, the colloquial dialect is called *Darija* and is used at home and in informal situations. Second,

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[28] For more information see Mohand Tilmatine, "Arabization and Linguistic Domination: Berber and Arabic in the North of Africa," in *Language Empires in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Christel Stolz, Colonial and Postcolonial Linguistics 6 (Boston: Gruyter, 2015), 4.

Classical Arabic is the language of the Qur'an and religion. Third, MSA refers to the Arabic used in communication, education, and government.

In Morocco, another language layer exists which consists of European tongues. Many consider French to be the language of culture, and it is also used by many government officials. The CIA Factbook states that French is "often the language of business, government, and diplomacy."[29] Interestingly, many state proceedings are a mixture of MSA and French, along with the entire field of medicine.[30] Nearly all commercial products have labels on one side in MSA and the other in French. A most remarkable phenomenon of Moroccan education is that while their K–12 education takes place in MSA, once a student enters university, he must understand, speak, read, and write in French fluently. Students who have not had great opportunities to study or practice French must take a year or two to focus on the French language before entering university. One sees the great advantage that families who can afford to educate their children in French have over those who cannot. French schools that are K–12, often called La Mission, teach Moroccan children MSA, but French is the primary language of education. Additionally, English and Spanish have taken on more prominent roles in society, the former especially so in the past two decades. Students who attend private K–12 Spanish-speaking or English-speaking schools, must also demonstrate this same proficiency in French before entering university. Meanwhile, Spanish has played its own unique role in the history of Moroccan languages.[31]

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[29] Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), "Morocco: CIA Factbook," *World Factbook*, accessed September 17, 2022, https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/morocco/.

[30] While unable to explore its ramifications here, the medical field in Morocco provides yet another example of this language hierarchy. Ellelan Degife writes of this phenomenon in a conference paper attempting to understand the doctor/patient relationship and the use of French and *Darija*. For further reading see Ellelan Degife, "Powerful Words: An Exploration of Linguistic Hierarchy in Moroccan Hospitals" (Brattleboro, VT: School for International Training, 2016).

[31] For a brief sketch of Spanish language influence in Morocco, see Brian Kirschen, "The (Not-So) Distant Relation between Spanish and Arabic," *Voices* 2, no. 1 (2014): 5–12.

Remarkably, if these language layers were not confusing enough, in 2011, the government of Morocco recognized Berber as one of its three official languages.[32] With this new constitution, all government forms, documents, and official signs must be made available in Berber, MSA, and French. Yet, as stated previously, three forms of Berber exist: Rifi, Middle Atlas, and Sousi. No particular language of the three has been specifically chosen. Instead, the government amalgamated a mixture of all three into a language that no one speaks. While creating this "high Berber," the government also added a third alphabet, using the Tifinagh script, which elementary students now study in schools—but few Moroccan adults can read it.[33]

See figure 1 below, which demonstrates the hierarchy of respectability among these national languages in Morocco. In this figure, the most highly respected languages are at the top, while the lower are at the bottom. This figure reveals how colonization has impacted language throughout Moroccan history up to the present. In the eighth century, Arabs came and conquered Morocco, bringing qur'anic Arabic as the language of religion and culture. Today, Moroccans who have had exceptional educational opportunities use MSA in their daily lives through radio, television, newspapers, and official meetings. Although the French left Morocco in 1956, their impact on culture and language cannot be overstated. Businesses, the entertainment and art industry, and anyone considered high-cultured should be able to read, write, and speak French at high levels. The use of English has grown immensely over the past two decades, being highly influential in the movie and music world. Many students under twenty have begun to at least dabble in English, as American music is pervasive. Especially in northern Morocco,

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[32] "Constitition of Morocco" (2011), art. V, p. 6, English translation, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Morocco_2011.pdf.

[33] For a fascinating brief history of Berbers and the Tifinagh script, dissertation Juan Luis Blanco, "Tifinagh and the IRCAM: Explorations in Cursiveness and Bicamelarism in the Tifinagh Script" (MA dissertation, University of Reading, 2014), https://www.academia.edu/16657385/ Tifinagh_and_the_IRCAM_ Explorations_in_Cursiveness_and_Bicamelarism_in_the_Tifinagh_script.

parents encourage their children to learn Spanish and emigrate for a better economic future.

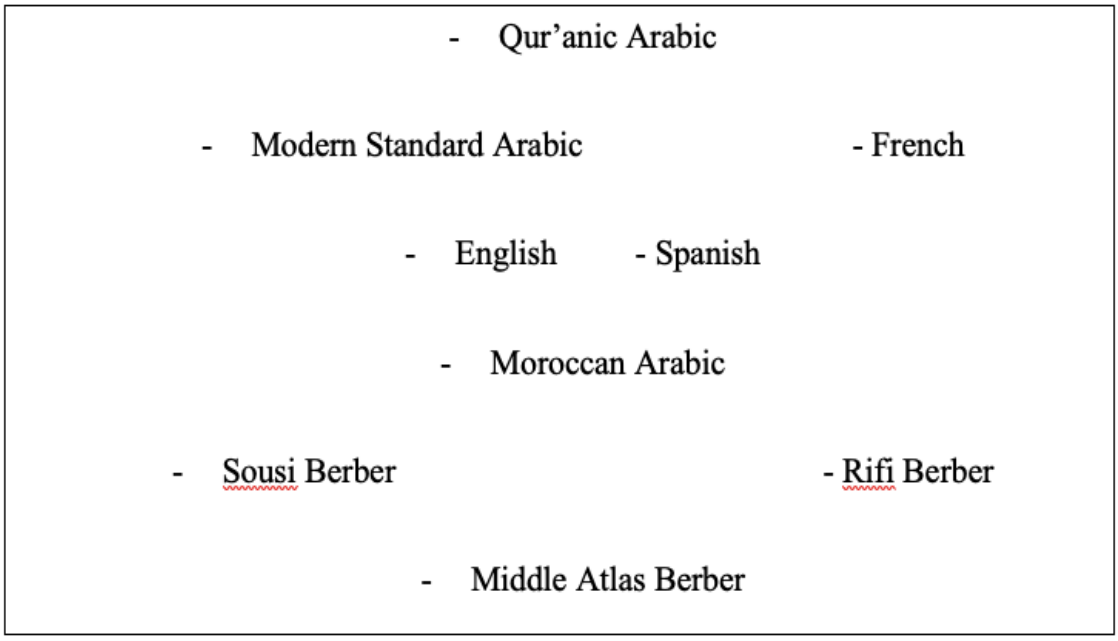

Figure 1. Hierarchy of language respectability in Morocco

Farther down the list, it appears that Moroccans hold *Darija* (Moroccan Arabic) in lower esteem, even though this is the mother tongue of millions. Still lower, many consider Rifi Berber and Sousi Berber as inferior languages, although native speakers view their mother tongues with great pride. Rifis are fiercely independent and do not agree with Moroccans' overall view of their language or culture. Sousis are the economists of Morocco and therefore wield power and influence in this manner.

Unfortunately, one finds the Tamazight language of the MABs at the bottom of the figure. While this observation is a stereotype, I find this attitude quite pervasive. Not considering themselves like their Berber cousins, as either independent or financial wizards, the MABs have generally struggled to find their place. History demonstrates how their countrymen spurned their language and culture, leaving deep wounds. The

assessment noted by Westermarck more than a century ago is still prevalent among a vast majority. Many young MABs are choosing to leave their culture and mother tongue behind and replace them with foreign equivalents. Jean Servier notes, "Berber has never been a language of the civilized, but much to the contrary, a language of the servant."[34] This opinion seems pervasive throughout the land and cannot be overlooked when considering Morocco's written and spoken languages.

Qur'anic Arabic heavily influences the Tamazight religious vocabulary. In many cases, the words used are simply transliterations into the respective Berber tongues. I provide some examples below. In figure 2 below, the word on the right is in Tamazight. The word in the middle is in qur'anic Arabic, while the word on the left is the English translation. Even with this small example, one can easily observe the strong influence that qur'anic Arabic has had upon the Tamazight language.

Namt / al neima / Grace	*rahimt* / *rahima* / mercy
Haqq / al *haq* / truth	*lmessih* / *al Messih*/ Christ
Liman /al *iman* / faith	*isalahan* / *salh* / righteous
shra' / al *shri'a* / Law	*m'aasit* / al *'asyan* / disobedience
ruh lqudus / *al rul al qudus* / Holy Spirit	

Figure 2. Religious vocabulary in Tamazight, MSA, and English

Therefore, one sees the tremendous challenge Bible translators face when attempting to render the Scriptures into the Tamazight language. The qur'anic Arabic may be the most influential language in Morocco among the highly religious. As Tamazight highly

[34] Jean Servier, *Les Berbères* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 37.

borrows the Qur'anic vocabulary, not only do the words transition over but the Islamic meaning likewise. In these instances, when one reads or hears a key term in the Bible borrowed from the Qur'an, there is no automatic transfer to a biblical meaning. On the contrary, the heavy mixing of Islamic ideas enters the biblical text and creates an enormous challenge for the reader.[35] One finds this obstacle not only occasionally—it is ubiquitous throughout both the Old Testament and the New Testament, hence the danger of utilizing a word-for-word replacement or using highly Islamic phraseology. This possibility is why I suggest avoiding these extremes and striving for a mediating approach.

Delimitations

In this dissertation, I am delimiting my research to indigenous non-Arabic-speaking peoples, especially the Berbers of North Africa. Until Islam arrived, many free men and women existed. Upon conquering these new places, Muslims introduced, among other things, the qur'anic language, which began to grow in its influence. As the newly conquered people did not immediately speak Arabic, this religious vocabulary was slow to take form and, over time, grew in many layers of understanding. For many of the PGs in North Africa, this Islamic hegemony has endured for more than a millennium. The aim of the BT project in which I have been involved has always been to target mother-tongue speakers of Tamazight. This PG has followed the pattern I describe in the previous paragraphs. My goal for this dissertation is to address the language challenges of these people, while realizing that many similar PGs and language groups exist to which the rubric I am creating might apply. I do not state that this tool will work for all PGs but may serve those in similar religious circumstances.

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[35] Bill Richardson addresses this point among Turkish Christians who are changing their vocabulary to avoid this very issue. However, as Richardson notes, these Turkish believers are also noticing a barrier for Muslims to understand this new Christian usage. For further reading see Bill T. Richardson, "Are We Speaking the Same Language? The Influence of Scripture Translations on How Christians and Muslims Talk about God," *Bible Translator* 70, no. 1 (2019): 16–34.

I argue that Bible translators should use a mediating approach in their first translations among indigenous non-Arabic speaking, Islamic peoples. This idea focuses on key biblical terms. I am not addressing the thousands of other words, which may also affect where a translation falls on the spectrum. I also am delimiting the use of key biblical terms in this paper. It would not be practical to address every term the BT team has encountered over the course of twenty years. Instead, I focus on some of the most challenging terms which have appeared on both sides of the Bible translation spectrums.

Conclusion

This dissertation seeks to aid translators among indigenous people, as few resources exist which can assist their arduous task. At the onset of the project, teams must determine their audience. For example, believers may use this Bible as an evangelism instrument or as a discipleship tool for the church. Additionally, they must decide to produce a translation that is word-for-word, idiomatic, or uses a mediating approach. For the first translation among indigenous Islamic people in North Africa, the tools presented in this dissertation can help translators target and attain a mediating approach. Later teams can also benefit from this research and avoid duplications. Furthermore, they can produce versions that will complement the Bibles previously completed.

In the next chapter, I introduce a brief history of English Bible translations and the philosophies behind them. Additionally, I examine Bible translation spectrums, trying to determine how and why translators place their works on the continuum. In this assessment, I present several authors and their philosophy of translation.

CHAPTER 2

A CONCISE HISTORY OF ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATION AND BIBLE TRANSLATION SPECTRUMS

In this chapter, I give a brief account of several crucial events in Bible translation history in the English-speaking world from the fourteenth century to the present day. The translators I consider had a philosophy that guided their work, and this presupposition directed their thought process and word choice. Furthermore, constraints from previous versions limited how translation eventually appeared in their day. Many more versions could be analyzed, yet for the sake of time, I limit this study to six.

Translation History

John Wycliffe

John Wycliffe was a fourteenth-century English theologian who served at Oxford. In his homeland, the spoken tongue of the common man and woman was English, yet Latin was the language of religion. Louis Hall writes, "The farmers who heard Wyclif [sic] at Fillingham and at Lutterworth knew no Latin, nor did the shopkeepers, grocers, and skinners of London. But they all knew English. Some of them could read and write it."[1] Even though Wycliffe lived two hundred years before the Reformation in Europe, he had a passion to remove the corruption that he saw in the churches around him. He felt that if the Scriptures were in the language of the people, they could change lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, the Church in England wanted the Bible to remain in Latin.

[1] Louis Brewer Hall, *The Perilous Vision of John Wyclif* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1983), 142.

Nevertheless, even the local priests struggled in their use of the ecclesiastical language. Hall continues, "It was not uncommon that the priest already giving mass could not explain the meaning of the Latin he recited, or even read a passage that he had not memorized."[2] Wycliffe's frustration boiled over into action. Wycliffe gathered together the needed materials for his small band of followers. Harry Freedman notes, "The Bible was the foundation of Christian belief and should not be the esoteric property of the clerics. But although parts of the Bible had previously been rendered into English, there was still no complete translation."[3] Finding a Vulgate was no easy task in the late 1300s, with copies of the Latin Bible being a scarce commodity. Hall adds, "If a church had an illuminated missal, gospel book, or psalter, the book would be one of the church treasures and was locked in a chest or chained so it would not be stolen. A complete Bible could be found only in the libraries of the largest abbeys, monasteries, and college halls."[4] While it remains uncertain how Wycliffe's team obtained the Scriptures, the work indeed began, possibly with a text from Queen's College, as Hall suggests.[5]

It would be safe to say that Wycliffe inspired the translation of the Bible, yet he probably did little in the actual translation process. F. F. Bruce writes, "It is doubtful if Wycliffe himself took any direct part in the work of Bible translation, but we need have no qualms about referring to the Wycliffite Bible, for it was under his inspiration and by his friends and colleagues that the work was done."[6] Nevertheless, Wycliffe's philosophy of translation was crucial to the project. This evidence is seen in the two translations

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[2] Hall, *Perilous Vision of John Wyclif*, 142.

[3] Harry Freedman, *The Murderous History of Bible Translations: Power, Conflict, and the Quest for Meaning* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 82.

[4] Hall, *Perilous Vision of John Wyclif*, 143.

[5] Hall, *Perilous Vision of John Wyclif*, 143.

[6] F. F. Bruce, *History of the Bible in English: From the Earliest Versions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 13.

which were produced bearing his name. The first, while he was still alive, was extremely literal, even word-for-word. Bruce notes,

> The earlier Wycliffite version is an extremely literal rendering of the Latin original. Latin constructions and Latin word-order are preserved even where they conflict with English idiom. This reflects one theory about Bible translation, according to which the sacred quality of the text could be preserved in translation only by the most painstaking word-for-word procedure. But a translation of this kind would have been of little value for ordinary people.[7]

Don Barger adds, "The team achieved success in translating into the vernacular, but the insistence upon maintaining a direct quotation hindered the effectiveness of the first translation."[8] Interestingly, Wycliffe wanted the Bible in the language of the people, yet copied Latin syntax and grammar, nearly to a fault.

However, the second translation, which his colleagues produced after his death, avoided the word-for-word philosophy, and sought to translate the meaning. Barger continues, "This second translation communicated better with English speakers because it followed a familiar sentence structure. This resulted in a more natural translation."[9] The results led to a high demand for Wycliffe's Bible, even at the very high price asked for these handwritten copies. His work in English helped open the door for Bibles in the vernacular in England.

William Tyndale

By the dawn of the sixteenth century, the Bible was available in many European languages, although English was lagging far behind in available translations.[10]

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[7] Bruce, *History of Bible in English*, 15.

[8] Donald Barger, "Toward the Development of a Bible Storying Evaluation Model Utilizing a Synthesis of Bible Translation Consultation Methods" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 51.

[9] Barger, "Development of Bible Storying Evaluation Model," 51.

[10] For an fascinating summary of Bible translations available in European languages in the late fifteenth to early sixteenth centuries, see David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 92–93.

Wycliffe's work was still available, yet not as a translation from the original languages. Fortunately, during the fervor of the Reformation in Germany, a young master of the Greek language in England began to be moved by the Lord with a vision to give his people the Bible in their own tongue.

William Tyndale, born in Gloucestershire in 1494/5, began his studies at Oxford around 1516, just a few years after Erasmus, the famous Greek professor, had departed.[11] As a gifted linguist, Tyndale could read the Scriptures himself in both Greek and Latin, yet he realized how desperately impossible this endeavor was for his fellow countrymen. He writes, "Because I had perceived by experience how it was impossible to establish the lay-people in any truth, except the Scriptures were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother-tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text."[12] During an argument with a staunch Catholic over this subject, Tyndale proclaimed, "If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost."[13] Unfortunately, the *Constitutions of Oxford*, published in 1408 by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundell, was still valid law in England. John Piper notes, "Together these statutes meant that you could be burned alive by the Catholic Church for simply reading the Bible in English."[14] With this firmly in Tyndale's thoughts, he quietly left his beloved England, the country for which he would eventually give his life. Bruce states that "[in] 1524, therefore, Tyndale sailed for the Continent, taking with him no doubt all the books which

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[11] Bruce, *History of Bible in English*, 28.

[12] James J. Ellis, *William Tyndale* (New York: T. Whittaker, 1890), 20–21.

[13] John Foxe and William Byron Forbush, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs: A History of the Lives, Sufferings, and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christian and the Protestant Martyrs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006), 139.

[14] John Piper, "Always Singing One Note—A Vernacular Bible: Why William Tyndale Lived and Died," Desiring God Conference for Pastors, Minneapolis, January 31, 2006, https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/always-singing-one-note-a-vernacular-bible.

he required for his translation project."[15] While in Germany, Tyndale set to work at an astonishing pace, and by February 1526, Tyndale had completed the New Testament and copies were on their way to England.[16]

Critical to this study, Tyndale seemed to strive for a mediating approach, although not always achieving his ideal. Reimer Faber adds,

> Especially in those passages in which the meaning of the original was reinforced by the word order, Tyndale was careful to preserve that order, even to the point of straining English convention. Thus characteristics of the Hebrew or Greek languages, such as repetitions, parallelisms, figures of speech and figures of thought, were retained in the translation. What Tyndale intended to achieve by this method was a translation of the substance and the form of Scripture. Complete fidelity to the original was one of Tyndale's principles.[17]

Upon first glance, this philosophy hardly seems to advocate a mediating approach to Bible translation. However, Faber continues,

> This is not to say that Tyndale strove for a word for word translation. Wherever the repetitiveness of the original text had semantic or stylistic importance, Tyndale rendered the words strictly; but wherever the tone or style of the original promoted it, Tyndale freely opted for synonyms and variation of expression. He had rejected the notion that a sacred quality resided in the words or in the order of the words of Scripture. Stylistic embellishments in the original were conveyed in the most appropriate form in English.[18]

One sees the challenge Tyndale faced in his work—on the one side, a fidelity to the original, while on the other, seeking to best explain the meaning in his own tongue. By 1534, he completed subsequent New Testament revisions and the Pentateuch before his capture in Europe. Tyndale's incredible work as a translator would cease, due to his premature death. David Daniell writes, "Nine-tenths of the Authorised Version's New Testament is Tyndale's. The same is true of the first half of the Old Testament, which is as

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[15] Bruce, *History of Bible in English*, 31.

[16] Bruce, *History of Bible in English*, 31.

[17] Riemer A. Faber, "William Tyndale as Translator of the Bible," *Christian Library*, accessed May 30, 2022, https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/article/william-tyndale-translator-bible.

[18] Faber, "William Tyndale as Translator."

far as he was able to get before he was executed outside Brussels in 1536."[19] Although persecuted for his life's work, Tyndale's final words before the executioner demonstrated the love he had for his nation. Foxe notes that Tyndale was "crying at the stake with a fervent zeal, and a loud voice, 'Lord! open the King of England's eyes.'"[20] The Lord accomplished this feat, as England became an epicenter for Bible translation for centuries to come. To this day, Tyndale's work continues to touch the entire world. His work and death inspired no less than seven additional English translations within seventy years of his martyrdom.

King James Bible

In 1604, King James I called a religious conference at Hampton Court. Little came from the actions at Hampton other than the desire for a new translation. Though there was some disagreement whether to execute another translation, the most important person in the room did agree to the work: the king himself. Critical to this decision was the choice to make this new Bible without marginal notes. King James had seen the results of the Geneva Bible's comments, which he deemed to be "very partial, untrue, seditious, and savouring too much of dangerous and traitorous conceits."[21] From the outset, these scholars were put under constraints on how and what they could translate. Gareth Lloyd Jones and his coauthors suggest,

> The translators' work was governed by a set of Rules specifying how they should go about their task. These Rules were drawn up by Bishop Richard Bancroft, ostensibly with input from the King . . . . The Rules address three main issues: the

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[19] David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994). 1. In actual number, Tyndale was not able to complete half of the Old Testament. The exact figure is eleven books beginning in Genesis and ending in 1 Kings. Nevertheless, Tyndale completed a sizable portion before his capture and execution.

[20] Foxe and Forbush, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 152.

[21] John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 457.

> use of earlier translations of the Bible; the appearance and language of the new translation; and the organisation of the companies' work.[22]

Bruce notes, "King James himself took a leading part in organizing the work of translation. Six panels of translators (forty-seven men in all) had the work divided up between them; the Old Testament was entrusted to three panels, the New Testament to two, and the Apocrypha to one."[23] These men worked from 1604 to 1611, after which several small committees reviewed the texts.

While the king sought to avoid marginal notes which could incite insurrection or religious division, he did allow the text to offer variant of meanings. David Norton writes,

> The latter part of the preface . . . discusses two of the translators' practices, their use of the margin to give "diversity of senses," and their avoidance of uniform translation for particular words or phrases. Both practices had (and have) their opponents. The danger of marginal alternatives is that they might be seen as undermining "the authority of the Scriptures for deciding of controversies" by making the text seem uncertain.[24]

The use of these marginal alternatives was an opportunity to challenge ideas put forth in the Geneva Bible, the King James Bible's (KJB) only real competition in 1611, according to Norton.[25] Over the next thirty years, these two Bibles would often be distinguished not by name but as the Bible with or without notes.[26] Interestingly, according to Norton, the rise in popularity of the KJB over the Geneva was in part due to its inferiority of product: paper, binding, and cover. The imported Geneva Bible was superior in quality, making it more expensive than the KJB. This lower priced KJB helped sales increase. Norton

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[22] Gareth Lloyd Jones, Helen Moore, and Julian Reid, "Material and Methods," in *Manifold Greatness: The Making of the King James Bible*, ed. Helen Moore and Julian Reid (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011), 91.

[23] Bruce, *History of Bible in English*, 97–98.

[24] David Norton, *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 114.

[25] Norton, *The King James Bible*, 135.

[26] Norton, *The King James Bible*, 134.

concludes, "What is most significant in these arguments is that there is nothing in them to suggest that the triumph of the KJB owed anything to its relative merits as a translation."[27] Nevertheless, the KJB has risen to the highest standard around the world as the most influential text ever written in English.

Beyond the avoidance of marginal notes, the first from the fourteen original rules states, "The ordinary Bible read in the Church, commonly called the Bishops' Bible, to be followed, and as little altered as the truth of the original will permit. These translations to be used where they agree better with the text than the Bishops' Bible, viz.: Tyndale's, Matthew's, Coverdale's, Whitchurch's, Geneva."[28] The texts which made this first rule were heavily used as sources, along with the original Hebrew and Greek in the translation process. Their inclusion as source texts heavily influenced key biblical terms translated by the KJB translators.

The goals of the KJB were similar to that of Tyndale seventy-five years earlier, a readable Bible that was extremely accurate. Gordon Campbell states, "The translation, however, aspires to literal accuracy rather than majesty, and on occasion leaves the job of translation half-done."[29] Yet Campbell continues, "That aspiration to translate literally led to some idioms that now seem formal, because the translators decided that certain words, especially in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, should be translated in the same way whenever they occurred; the effect is an incantatory quality that can be mistaken for majesty."[30] With over 400 years gone by, the language in the KJB would certainly be considered majestic by many. However, as Campbell notes, the desire for accuracy seems

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[27] Norton, *The King James Bible*, 135–38.

[28] Norton, *The King James Bible*, 86.

[29] Gordon Campbell, *Bible: The Story of the King James Version, 1611–2011* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 81.

[30] Campbell, *Bible*, 81.

to override clarity, especially in today's contemporary usage. Norton concludes, "The translators have avoided the jargon of both the puritans and the Roman Catholics. Their aim is like Tyndale's, to be faithful to the language of the originals and comprehensible to everybody."[31] It would be unfair to overly criticize a translation that has endured four centuries. Not only has the KJB helped lead millions to faith in Christ, linguistically, the text has changed the English language. Nevertheless, the KJB can be judged as to have achieved its goals, at least at the dawn of the seventeenth century.

The English Revised Version and the American Standard Version

With the passing of more than two hundred and fifty years, the need for an updated Bible was pressing heavy. The KJB was *the* Bible for the vast majority of Christians around the English-speaking world. Yet, the language was changing and the King's Bible was becoming archaic. The average reader struggled to comprehend the text. Noting its own limitations, the preface to the KJB reads, "But how shall men meditate in that, which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknown tongue?"[32] The challenge of the 1800s was how to make the language new with such a beloved text as the KJB.

However, the question of revisions and new translations was not a new topic. Samuel Hemphill wrote in the early 1900s, "It was inevitable, therefore, that the call for a fresh Revision would be heard sooner or later. Indeed, isolated scholars here and there did call for it at various times even in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but it was only about eighty years ago that the idea began to take shape in any tangible form."[33] Yet

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[31] Norton, *The King James Bible*, 142.

[32] Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Translators to the Reader: Preface to the King James Version 1611* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935).

[33] Samuel Hemphill, *A History of the Revised Version of the New Testament* (London: Elliot Stock, 1906), 21.

the difficulty was how to update such a beloved text. Not only had the KJB affected the spiritual life of multitudes of believers, but it had also affected the English language.[34] Therefore, it would need an incredible team to create a new text.

The team began the revision process in 1870, of what would eventually be called the English Revised Version (ERV). The preface to the ERV notes, "The character of the Revision was determined for us from the outset by the first rule, 'to introduce as few alterations as possible, consistently with faithfulness.' Our task was revision, not re-translation."[35] Just as the KJB was similarly under the constraints of following the Bibles of its day, the ERV had to follow the limits of the KJB. Charles Ellicott adds,

> If it is to be hereafter a popular Version it can only become so by exhibiting, in every change that may be introduced, a sensitive regard for the diction and tone of the present Version [KJB], and also by evincing, in the nature and extent of the changes, a due recognition of the whole internal history of the English New Testament. In other words, the new work must be on the old lines.[36]

Even with the praise given to the KJB, the preface of the ERV gives higher acclaim to another:

> That Translation was the work of many hands and of several generations. The foundation was laid by William Tyndale. His translation of the New Testament was the true primary Version. The Versions that followed were either substantially reproductions of Tyndale's translation in its final shape, or revisions of Versions that had been themselves almost entirely based on it.[37]

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[34] Examples of the KJV usage in modern English today are as follows: "by the skin of one's teeth" (Job 19:20); "the land of the living" (Ps 27:13); "Get thee behind me" (Luke 4:8); "Thou shalt not kill" (Exod 20:13); "a still small voice" (1 Kgs 19:12); "Now are the mighty fallen" (2 Sam 1:19); "Know for a certainty" (Josh 23:13); "To everything there is a season" (Eccl 3:1); "Set thine house in order" (Isa 38:1); "Be horribly afraid" (Jer 2:12); "the apple of his eye" (Deut 32:10); "broken heart" (Ps 34:18); "two-edged sword" (Prov 5:4); and many more. For a more complete list see Celia Webb, "Contributions of the King James Bible to the English Language," 2021, http://www.pilinutpress.com/Articles/Vocabulary/ContributionsofKingJamesBibletoEnglishLanguage.html.

[35] Jerusalem Chamber, "Prefaces to the English Revised Version (1881–1885)," November 11, 1880, https://www.bible-researcher.com/ervpreface.html.

[36] Charles John Ellicott, *Considerations on the Revision of the English Version of the New Testament* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1870), 53–54.

[37] Jerusalem Chamber, "Prefaces to ERV."

The team of scholars in England worked for eleven years on the New Testament and fifteen years on the Old Testament.

In the preface to the 1881 ERV, one reads, "The principles and Rules agreed to by the Committee of Convocation on the twenty-fifth day of May 1870 were as follows: '1. To introduce as few alterations as possible into the Text of the Authorised Version consistently with faithfulness.'"[38] This constraint alone put the revisers at a distinct disadvantage. Furthermore, they strove, at times, to follow the original texts even more word-for-word than the KJB. These choices produced difficult readings of the ERV. Bruce adds, "Although the [E] R.V. has been widely used in schools, colleges and universities, as well as by private students who realize its superiority in accuracy over the A.V. [Authorized Version], it never began to replace the A.V. in popular esteem."[39]

On the other side of the ocean, the American Standard Version (ASV) was not a true translation project. Jack Lewis notes, "The American Standard Version, the outgrowth of American participation in the revision project which produced the Revised Version (1881–85), may be thought of as an American edition of that version rather than as an independent one."[40] The work began in 1870 yet the text was not completed until 1901. As the scholars passed texts from the United States to colleagues in England, the latter heartily approved of the recensions. The preface to the ASV reads,

> The American Revision Committee, after the publication of the Revised Version in 1885, resolved to continue their organization, and have regarded it as a possibility that an American recension of the English Revision might eventually be called for . . . . The judgment of scholars, both in Great Britain and in the United States, has so far approved the American preferences that it now seems to be expedient to issue an edition of the Revised Version with those preferences embodied in the text.[41]

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[38] Jerusalem Chamber, "Prefaces to ERV."

[39] Bruce, *History of Bible in English*, 152.

[40] Jack P. Lewis, *The English Bible, from KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 69.

[41] Preface to *The Holy Bible: American Standard Version* (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1901),

Therefore, although the project was much more lengthy in its production, the positive reception of the ASV text was higher than that of the ERV in England.

The ASV intended to be both readable for the average churchgoer and still usable as a serious study Bible. The preface to the ASV reads as follows: "The present volume, it is believed, will on the one hand bring a plain reader more closely into contact with the exact thought of the sacred writers than any version now current in Christendom, and on the other hand prove itself especially serviceable to students of the Word."[42] However, the goal of becoming a mediating Bible does not seem to have materialized. Lewis writes, "In striving for literalness, the ASV sometimes imitates Hebrew and Greek word order and puts the speaker first where current use demands a reversal lest the speaker appear ill-mannered: "I and the Father" (John 10:30)."[43] A significant constraint comes from the vocabulary chosen. Lewis adds, "Because the ASV tried to use the vocabulary of Tudor and Jacobean authors (sixteenth–seventeenth century), it was an artificially created antique when it appeared."[44] Therefore although the committee writers who penned the preface to the ASV felt that they had avoided too much literalness, the constraints from the KJB and choices made by the revisionists left the text more word-for-word than initially intended. A vital consideration to ponder here is that, in reality, a text's readers (or testers) should determine where a Bible lands on a spectrum rather than the committee of translators.

At the time of the publication of the ASV, the KJB was still the preferred Bible in the English-speaking world, even after nearly 300 years. This fact would remain true for more than another half century. However, by the mid- to late-1900s, two new Bibles

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[42] Preface to NASB (1901).

[43] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 96.

[44] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 96.

would arrive, which would begin to change the dominance of the KJB: the New American Standard (NASB) and the New International Version (NIV).

New American Standard Bible

According to the preface of the NASB, "In 1959 a new translation project was launched, based on the time-honored principles of translation of the ASV and KJV."[45] Today, many Christians consider the NASB to be a "free-standing" translation. However, at first glance, it is difficult to know if this statement is true or if it is simply a revision of the 1901 ASV. When the NASB Gospel of John was first released in 1962, Robert Bratcher wrote a less than cheery review of the book. He notes, "It is doubtful whether the ASV really merits this kind of revision, which is less a revision than it is an attempted "modernization" of the 1901 version."[46] However, Lewis retorts, "The gulf separating the ASV and the NASB is such that the NASB must be evaluated as a new translation. One cannot assume that it is what its title seems to imply—an update of the ASV."[47] Therefore, Lewis concludes, "Rather than claiming to be a revised ASV, the NASB actually claims only 'to follow the principles used in the ASV.' In view of both the title and the praise given the ASV in the preface to the 1963 NASB, the observable differences between the ASV and the NASB assume more significance."[48] The preface for the 1995 NASB reads, "Translation work for the NASB was begun in 1959. In the preparation of this work numerous other translations have been consulted along with the linguistic tools and literature of biblical scholarship."[49] Thus, according to their preface,

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[45] "Preface to the New American Standard Bible," accessed June 8, 2022, http://www.bible-researcher.com/nasb-preface.html.

[46] Robert G. Bratcher, "Book Review: New American Standard Gospel of John," *Bible Translator* 13, no. 4 (October 1962): 236.

[47] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 167.

[48] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*.

[49] "NASB Preface (1901)."

the NASB is a translation and not simply a revision. The Lockman Foundation first published the completed text (OT and NT) in 1970.

The importance of knowing if the text is a translation or a revision lies in the constraints the translators must follow. However, as seen, the translators of the NASB were not held under the constraints of the ASV. Instead, they made deliberate choices to follow a more formal model. Lewis adds that the translators goals are "that their publications be true to the original Hebrew and Greek, be grammatically correct, and be understandable to the masses."[50] In the case of the NASB, the first goal received higher priority than the other two. Bruce Metzger labels this translation "severely literalistic."[51] Bratcher's critique states, "The literal reproduction of the Greek word order likewise has some disastrous results."[52] Even the Lockman Foundation's own website notes they are, at times, seeking a word-for-word translation. They propose, "When it was felt that the word-for-word literalness was unacceptable to the modern reader, a change was made in the direction of a more current English idiom. In the instances where this has been done, the more literal rendering has been indicated in the notes."[53] Therefore, according to this statement, there are indeed times when a word-for-word translation was the goal. In contrast, Sakae Kubo and Walter Specht note, "The goal of using contemporary English in the revision [of the NASB] often required a departure from the word-for-word literalness of the ASV, one of its chief faults."[54] As with any translation, there remains much subjectivity when determining "literalness" from the audience's point of view.

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[50] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 166.

[51] Bruce M. Metzger, "Trials of the Translator," *Theology Today* 33, no. 1 (April 1976): 97.

[52] Bratcher, "Book Review," 236.

[53] Lockman Foundation, "About the NASB," accessed June 10, 2022, https://nasb.literalword.com/about/translation/.

[54] Sakae Kubo and Walter F. Specht, *So Many Versions? Twentieth-Century English Versions of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 223.

Lewis notes several laudable aspects of the NASB along with some critique. First, he compliments the translation by stating, "The conservative theological stance of the NASB is to be seen in its consistent retention of traditional theological words."[55] Second, he adds, "Much clarity is gained in the NASB by using current vocabulary."[56] However, he notes his confusion at the stated goals of the translators. He writes,

> One wonders if the various aims stated by the producers of the NASB are actually compatible with each other. While stating that "the attempt has been made to render the grammar and terminology of the ASV into contemporary English," it also states that the NASB kept the original word order whenever possible, believing that this was a means the [original] writer used to accent and emphasize what he deemed most important.[57]

Thus, the translators were not put under the same restraints as a team revising a text, yet they have created their own constraints and have struggled to keep them consistently. The insistence in word-for-word translation has caused the text, at times, to miss the goal of being understandable to the masses. Lewis adds that the NASB provides over 700 margin notes of "even more literal renderings" in the four Gospels alone.[58] Overall, the NASB has striven for true accuracy to the original Hebrew and Greek and, for many readers, it has achieved its goal. Not long after the first publication of this Bible, came a popular version which took a very different approach to translation, the NIV.

New International Version

Not long after the publication of the NASB, a group of Bible scholars from Palos Heights, Illinois, released the NIV. According to its preface, beginning in 1965, a group of more than 100 scholars worked directly from the original languages to produce a

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[55] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 179.

[56] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 179.

[57] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 193.

[58] Lewis, *English Bible, from KJV to NIV*, 188.

uniquely trans-denominational text in modern English.[59] Not only was the goal to cut across church lines, but also beyond national borders. Kubo notes, "The committee producing it consisted of distinguished Bible scholars from such English-speaking countries as Canada, England, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the United States. [Furthermore], English is today an international language, and the translators have sought to use vocabulary common to the major English-speaking nations of the world."[60] The process of translation was quite particular. First, the text was assigned to a group of scholars for initial translation. Second, an editorial committee examined the work for needed revisions in comparison with original languages. Third, another committee checked the revised work. Finally, the Committee on Bible Translation reviewed the work and made any necessary changes. This text was then made ready for publication.[61] Kubo adds,

> Few translations since the KJV of 1611 have been as carefully done as this one. At each stage of the process there has been a wrestling of various minds with the sacred text and an honest attempt to say in simple, clear English what the Bible writers express in the originals. It is difficult to conceive a plan that could have better checks and balances than the one used. Along with this, attention has been given to the literary quality of the English and an attempt has been made to achieve a version worthy of memorization.[62]

This careful planning and crafting has made the NIV one of the most highly acclaimed Bibles in the world.

The philosophy behind the translation of the NIV is unique in comparison with the other texts I have mentioned in this study. All of these previous Bibles had a goal to produce versions that were heavily focused on the form of original text; some even sought after a word-for-word model. However, the NIV committees determined to

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[59] "New International Version Preface (1983)," accessed June 11, 2022, https://www.bible-researcher.com/niv-preface.html.

[60] Kubo and Specht, *So Many Versions?*, 244.

[61] For a more thorough overview of the translation process, see "NIV Preface (1983)."

[62] Kubo and Specht, *So Many Versions?*, 245.

attempt a translation that brought over to English, from the biblical languages, a work which was thought-for-thought. This method does not ignore accuracy in the translation process. On the contrary, the preface to the NIV adds,

> The first concern of the translators has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the thought of the Biblical writers. They have weighed the significance of the lexical and grammatical details of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. *At the same time* [emphasis added], they have striven for more than a word-for-word translation. Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible demands frequent modifications in sentence structure and constant regard for the contextual meaning of words.[63]

Therefore, while seeking to produce a highly accurate translation, the scholars also realized that languages rarely correlate with a word-for-word model. In this sense, the work was an attempt to find a middle ground on a spectrum between Formal Equivalence and Functional Equivalence.[64] Within this goal, the preface also notes, "Concern for clear and natural English—that the New International Version should be idiomatic but not idiosyncratic, contemporary but not dated—motivated the translators and consultants. At the same time, they tried to reflect the differing styles of the Biblical writers."[65] Therefore, in a sense, the translation attempted to go to neither extreme on a spectrum of being too word-for-word or too paraphrastic.

The text certainly has received mixed reviews since its original publication nearly fifty years ago. D. Evert states an important consideration: "At times it is so close to the RSV that one wonders why all this energy and money should have been spent on

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[63] "NIV Preface (1983)."

[64] In the latter section of this chapter, I extensively examine the idea of Formal and Functional Equivalence. In short, a formal translations seeks to keep the form of the original languages (i.e., sentence structure, verb tense, word-for-word translation if possible, and often follows the same word order). A functional text attempts to bring a thought-for-thought translation to the reader and may change any necessary aspect of the original text previously mentioned in order to achieve this goal. For a deeper reading on the subject see John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974).

[65] "NIV Preface (1983)."

another version."[66] If Evert's evaluation is true, translators must assess how many resources should be put into similar projects. Furthermore, they must look to the needs in the Christian community or possibly produce an evangelistic text for non-believers.

On the other side, the NIV also has received many positive reviews; for example, F. F. Bruce called the work "highly favorable."[67] The committee admits the text is still imperfect and has undergone several revisions—1984, 2005, and 2011. Overall, the NIV publishers have produced one of the most popular thought-for-thought Bibles while, ostensibly achieving their goal of a mediating approach.

The Message

Eugene Peterson was born in 1932, in Washington, and grew up in Montana. When he had completed his graduate studies at Johns Hopkins, he began to teach Hebrew and Greek at New York Theological Seminary, where he taught students who wanted to learn the biblical languages in order to grow in their biblical knowledge. However, the Lord called Peterson to move to Bel Air, Maryland, where he became the founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church. As he began to preach, he noticed that there were many in his congregation who fell into two categories. Peterson describes his change from teaching to pastoring:

> The first noticeable difference was that nobody seemed to care much about the Bible, which so recently people had been paying me to teach them. Many of the people I worked with now knew virtually nothing about it, had never read it, and weren't interested in learning. Many others had spent years reading it but for them it had gone flat through familiarity, reduced to cliches.[68]

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[66] D. Evert, "New Translation Enters Crowded Field," *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, December 14, 1973, 22.

[67] F. F. Bruce, "The New International Version: Is It Living? Is It Today's English? Is It Revised? Will It Become the New American Standard?," *Eternity* 30 (January 1976): 46–47.

[68] "Preface to The Message" accessed June 14, 2022, http://message-for-today.blogspot.com/2014/12/the-message-preface.html.

He continues, "I lived in two language worlds, the world of the Bible and the world of Today. I had always assumed they were the same world. But these people didn't see it that way."[69] Seeing the apathy in the church, Peterson began to change his approach and the wording he was using.

He taught a class on the book of Galatians while using contemporary vocabulary. In his own words, Peterson states, "Writing straight from the original text, I began to attempt to bring into English the rhythms and idioms of the original language. I knew that the early readers of the New Testament were captured and engaged by these writings and I wanted my congregation to be impacted in the same way."[70] One sees here, even before he had the thought of translating the Bible, Peterson wanted to have God's Word impact today's hearer just as it did when the early readers were confronted with the Scriptures in *Koine* Greek. The story continues:

> As he shared his version of Galatians with them, they quit stirring their coffee and started catching Paul's passion and excitement as he wrote to a group of Christians whom he was guiding in the ways of Jesus Christ. Later on, Peterson included some of his work on Galatians in the book *Traveling Light*. An editor at NavPress read *Traveling Light* and was so gripped by what he read that he . . . [was] motivated . . . to write to Peterson in April of 1990 to ask if he would consider translating the entire New Testament.[71]

Peterson accepted the offer as he was contemplating leaving the pastorate after thirty years, and spent the next two years solely focused on translating the New Testament.

In the introduction to *The Message*, Peterson writes, "Revelation" means that we are reading something we couldn't have guessed or figured out on our own. Revelation is what makes the Bible unique."[72] This message and revelation from God is

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[69] "Preface to The Message."

[70] NavPress, "What is *The Message*?," accessed October 31, 2022, https://www.navpress.com/what-is-the-message.

[71] NavPress, "What is the Message?"

[72] Eugene Peterson, introduction to *The Message Study Bible Conversations Repack, Capturing the Notes and Reflections of Eugene Peterson* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2012), 16, accessed June 14, 2022, https://archive.org/details/messagestudybibl0000unse/page/16/mode/2up?view=theater.

what Peterson is trying to recapture in modern speech in his paraphrastic Bible. At times, *The Message* runs the danger of losing the historicity of the Bible as it attempts to use contemporary language. Michael J. Gorman adds, "Peterson's laudable goal is pastoral—to render the biblical text into contemporary idiom, operating with a clear theory of functional equivalence. The result is an exegesis, but it is not itself the basis for exegesis . . . . Some of Peterson's idiomatic renderings, however, are rather odd."[73]

Overall, while the goal is commendable, the text seems to have gone too far into twentieth-century idiomatic speech. In Peterson's defense, he adds, "*The Message* is a reading Bible. It is not intended to replace the excellent study Bibles that are available. My intent here (as it was earlier in my congregation and community) is simply to get people reading it who don't know that the Bible is read-able at all, at least by them, and to get people who long ago lost interest in the Bible to read it again."[74]

Bible Translation Spectrums

Eugene Nida (1914–2011) introduced many concepts in the field of Bible translation that have greatly influenced the work today. One of his tremendous career results is an initial idea of a translation spectrum in which one sees Formal Equivalence/Correspondence on one side of a continuum and Dynamic Equivalence on the opposite end. Nida writes, "One is constantly faced by a series of polar distinctions which force him to choose content as opposed to form, meaning as opposed to style, equivalence as opposed to identity, the closest equivalence as opposed to any equivalence, and naturalness as opposed to formal correspondence."[75] His ideas helped influence a wave of new versions which began as Dynamic Equivalent translations. Over

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[73] Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 50–51.

[74] "Preface to The Message."

[75] Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 14.

time, Nida and his colleagues made some adjustments to their terminology. In the preface of *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation*, De Waard and Nida note,

> One conspicuous difference in terminology in this volume . . . is the use of the expression "functional equivalence" rather than "dynamic equivalence." The substitution of "functional equivalence" is not designed to suggest anything essentially different from what was earlier designated by the phrase "dynamic equivalence." Unfortunately, the expression "dynamic equivalence" has often been misunderstood as referring to anything which might have special impact and appeal for receptors.[76]

Therefore, the new wording of Functional Equivalent became more prevalent as Dynamic Equivalent took on additional, unwanted meaning. Glen Kerr adds,

> What seems to have happened is that readers of Nida ignored the specific methodology, applying dynamic equivalence broadly. Any style of translation that is not overtly literal, that has any degree of equivalence, whether paraphrase, summation, cultural adaptation, or even free variation, has been called dynamic equivalence. The term had become so imprecise as to be unusable. Therefore Nida, repudiating those imprecise applications, rejected "dynamic equivalence" in favor of "functional equivalence."[77]

Therefore, most BTs today use the term "Functional Equivalent." Although, as I demonstrate, different scholars and authors have their own terminologies. I now look at five different translation spectrums and evaluate their use in Bible translation (BT) work among the Berbers.

Beekman and Callow

In 1974, John Beekman and John Callow published the book *Translating the Word of God*, building off the work of Nida. An important innovation was using a Bible

[76] Jan De Waard and Eugene A. Nida, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating* (Nashville: Nelson, 1986), 10.

[77] Glen J. Kerr, "Dynamic Equivalence and Its Daughters: Placing Bible Translation Theories in Their Historical Context," *Journal of Translation* 7, no. 1 (2011): 10.

Translation chart, which demonstrated in a picture what Nida had described in words. Figure 3 reproduces Beekman and Callow's spectrum.[78]

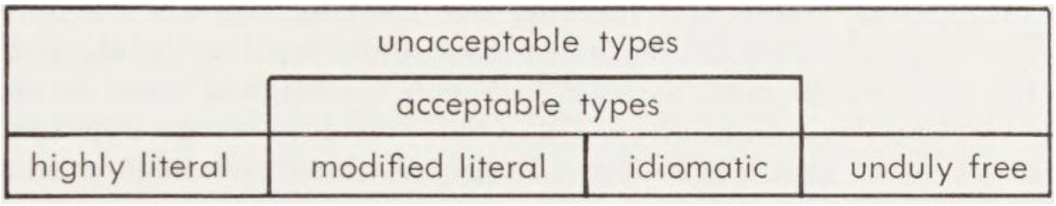

Figure 3. Acceptable types of translation

The authors write, "Although there are these two basic approaches to translation, they give rise to four main types of translations: (1) highly literal, (2) modified literal, (3) idiomatic, (4) unduly free. These four represent a continuum from one extreme to another."[79] For clarity, according to Beekman and Callow, the types of translations on the far left and the far right represent the Unacceptable types. The Acceptable types of translations fall towards the middle as Modified Literal and Idiomatic.[80] I agree with Beekman and Callow as I emphasize the need for a mediating approach to avoid these extreme ends of the spectrum. Not only may these translations fail to communicate, I argue they can reinforce Islamic beliefs among Berber PGs.

Wayne Grudem

In *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation*, Wayne Grudem et al. present the case, as the title suggests, for translating the Bible in an

[78] Figure 3 is found in Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 21.

[79] Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 21.

[80] Dave Brunn uses this same spectrum by Beekman and Callow in his book: Dave Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 63.

essentially literal manner. Grudem inserts a BT spectrum, albeit with different terms. Figure 4 reproduces the spectrum by Grudem et al.[81]

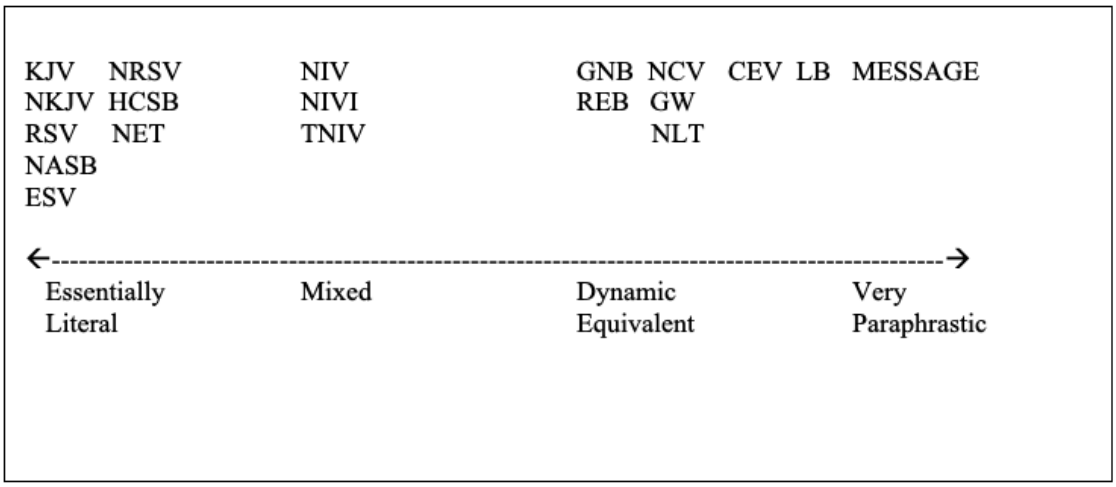

Figure 4. Grudem spectrum

Grudem avers that Dynamic Equivalent has a broader impact than the chart may illustrate. He notes, "Dynamic equivalence translations fall along a broader spectrum than essentially literal translations because there is a wide variety in how much they are willing to paraphrase and to simplify to an easily understood idea in each verse of sentence."[82] This quote reminds the reader why Nida wanted to abandon the label of Dynamic Equivalence for Functional Equivalence. Although not stated in the chart, Grudem and his colleagues argue that the acceptable types of translations would only be those on the left column, and all of the other three would be unacceptable. Grudem adds that he could not use a text such as the NIV to teach students, to teach an adult Bible

[81] Figure 4 is found in Wayne Grudem, "Are Only *Some* Words of Scripture Breathed Out by God? Why Plenary Inspiration Favors 'Essentially Literal' Bible Translation," in *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation*, by C. John Collins et al. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 22.

[82] Grudem, "*Some* Words Breathed Out by God?," 22.

study, to preach, for home fellowship groups, or for memorizing the Bible. However, at times the NIV appears to be begrudgingly accepted by him for reading purposes only.[83]

Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss

In 2007, Fee and Strauss combined to author the book *How to Choose a Bible Translation for All Its Worth.* The text includes a translation spectrum, as presented below.[84]

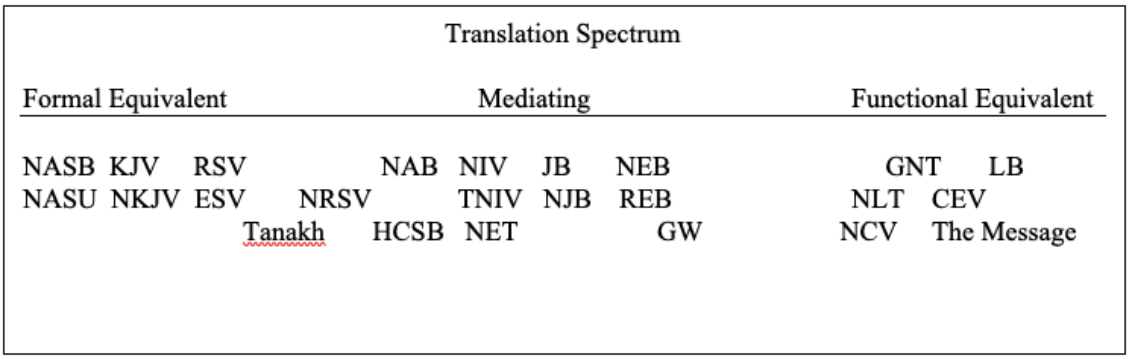

Figure 5. Fee and Strauss spectrum

The authors add, "Notice that in addition to formal and functional versions, we have introduced a third category, mediating, which represents a middle ground between these two. Mediating versions . . . are sometimes more literal, sometimes more idiomatic, seeking to maintain a balance between form and function."[85] The term *Mediating* combines categories of several other authors previously mentioned, emphasizing a balanced approach.

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[83] Grudem, "*Some* Words Breathed Out by God?," 22.

[84] Figure 5 found in Gordon Fee and Mark Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 27.

[85] Fee and Strauss, *How to Choose a Translation*, 28.

A critical component of these charts is understanding the categories as not being rigidly delineated, as every translation contains verses that fall throughout the spectrum. Brunn adds,

> There is no such thing as a purely modified literal translation or a purely idiomatic translation . . . there are no clear-cut lines of demarcation between the [three or] four types. Every translation fluctuates back and forth along this continuum—some more than others—but all translations vary in their degree of literalness from passage to passage, verse to verse, and even word to word. Although some translators have tried to assign an approximate point along this continuum for each English translation, I think it would be more appropriate and accurate to assign a range for each translation.[86]

As Brunn suggests for English Bibles, the same is true in translations among Berber PGs and, in fact, every Bible translation worldwide. One verse may follow form very well and continue to be understood, while another verse, in the exact translation, needs to be much more idiomatic. Therefore, placing a particular version in a category depends on it being more often like its label rather than always being that way.

Ernst Wendland

In his paper "Exploring the Continuum of Modern Bible Translating," Wendland also offers a Bible Translation spectrum. I present his figure below.[87]
A novel aspect of Wendland's chart is the understanding that all translations include mediation. More literal versions contain the least amount of mediation, while more literary ones contain the most. My concern with the term *literal* is that it can have two meanings. The first understanding would be a form-based translation, as I understand Wendland to intend. The second meaning could be understood as giving the text's literal meaning, or authorial intent. Hopefully, every Bible translator would like to see the literal meaning understood by the reader. Wendland's analysis of the various English versions

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[86] Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions*, 65–66.

[87] Ernst Wendland, "Exploring the Continuum of Modern Bible Translating: A Comparative Overview of Motives, Methods, Media, and Models," unpublished paper, April 2021, https://www.academia.edu/44360360/EXPLORING_THE_CONTINUUM_OF_MODERN_BIBLE_TRANSLATING_A_Comparative_Overview_of_Motives_Methods_Media_and_Models_version_2.

lines up with the other charts in this study. Wendland's middle area, which he calls Content, is the same as a mediating approach, although he uses different terminology.

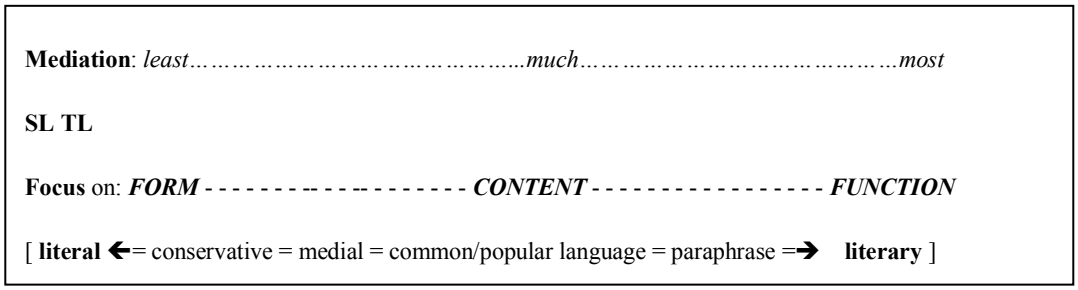

Figure 6. Wendland spectrum

Inspiration, Translation Types, and Theories

In this section, I briefly examine the doctrine of inspiration and the importance of remaining true to the text as a translator. I also present three main types of Bible translation and their philosophies.[88] I demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses with each category.

Inspiration

When translating the Scriptures, the question of inspiration becomes central to the task. A stern warning exists in Deuteronomy 4:2: "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you." A similar admonition exists in Revelation 22:18–19.[89] Certainly, translators should sense a holy fear when handling the Word of God. However, simply stating that one

[88] In the previous section, I demonstrated that some models use four types of categories. I am combining those groupings in the center simply as a mediating approach.

[89] "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll" (Rev 22:18–19).

believes in the Bible has become more complicated. Charles Ryrie's lengthy quote speaks well to this topic:

> These differences call for precision in stating the biblical doctrine. Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one's belief in full inspiration was the statement, "I believe in the inspiration of the Bible." But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text, it became necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible." To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible." Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, "I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Bible." But then "infallible" and "inerrant" began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of "unlimited inerrancy." Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching.[90]

Each of the following translation types is supported by specific translators, scholars, and authors who feel that their particular philosophy guards themselves against unnecessary changes in the text. Furthermore, the proponents of these theories all hold to the inspiration to which Ryrie refers. A vital difference is how this inspiration process plays out in the actual practice of translation.

Essentially Literal Versions

The philosophy behind essentially literal versions focuses on keeping the form of the original autographs. Grudem uses this term (essentially literal) to denote the far left of the spectrum, referred to by some as Formal Equivalence. Grudem emphasizes, "The main point is that essentially literal translations attempt to represent *the meaning of every word* in the original in some way or other in the resulting translation."[91] Therefore, the importance of each word's inspiration is critical in this viewpoint. Furthermore, he states, "The evangelical doctrine of Scripture is that every word of the original is exactly what

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[90] Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1986), 67.

[91] Grudem, "*Some* Words Breathed Out by God?," 20.

God wanted it to be."[92] For Grudem, the significance of this philosophy relies on the importance that the Scriptures put on every word. Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God'" (Matt 4:4). Ryken notes, "All translation theorists assign priority to *something*."[93] For those who follow this translation philosophy, the priority is at the word level rather than the thought level. Ryken fears translators can "move beyond translation to functions ordinarily assigned to commentators and editors."[94] I agree with Ryken; admittedly, the danger exists for the translator to begin to add his personal thoughts and go beyond what the Holy Spirit inspired the original writers to pen.

Another critical aspect of essentially literal translations is the highly elevated status of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Eugene Glassman adds that in Essentially Literal versions, "a translator's chief attention is on the *source* language."[95] A danger could arise where one might overly focus on the target language, which could change the message and intention of the authors. Umberto Eco adds, "In translation proper, there is an implicit law, that is, the ethical obligation to respect what the author has written."[96] Eco reminds the translator of the significance given to the original autographs. The apostle Paul writes, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 2:16). Therefore, a certain holy reverence should always be in the minds of the translators as they proceed. In essential literal versions, the translator will seek to stay as near to the original text at the expense of complete comprehension.

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[92] Wayne Grudem, "What's Wrong with 'Gender Neutral' Bible Translations?" (paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Jackson, MS, November 1996).

[93] Ryken, "Five Myths," 59.

[94] Ryken, "Five Myths," 63.

[95] Eugene H. Glassman, *The Translation Debate: What Makes a Bible Translation Good?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981), 48–49.

[96] Umberto Eco, *Mouse or Rat: Translation as Negotiation* (London: Phoenix, 2004), 3.

Strengths of essentially literal versions. In this dissertation, I argue that a mediating approach is the preferred type of translation among Berber peoples. However, this position does not deny that an essentially literal approach has particular strengths in the proper situation. Edward Greenstein notes two strengths in following this translation philosophy. He writes,

> Aside from a purist's devotion to words, there are two other foundations supporting more literal translation. The one is stylistic. The meaning of a biblical passage may hinge on repetition of a word or an allusion. A second basis supporting the literal mode of translation, in addition to stylistic, is anthropological. Instead of telling us how we would say it, a literal translation tells us how they would say it.[97]

Indeed, a text such as 1 Corinthians 13 and its repetition of ἀγάπη (God's love) would fall into this stylistic need, as noted by Greenstein. The word's recurrence allows Paul to emphasize how God's love is vastly different from man's.

While stylistic themes are essential, the most common reason I hear for English-speaking Christians preferring a word-for-word translation is that they want to see what the Hebrew and Greek say, or, as Greenstein notes above, "how they would say it." One sees a clear example that demonstrates how the Hebrew writers would say it in Amos 1:3. The English Standard Version (ESV) translates Amos, "Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment." A more idiomatic translation would completely obfuscate the anthropological approach used by Amos.

Strauss advocates for a mediating approach in translation. However, he also feels there is a place in every Christian's library for a more essentially literal translation. He adds,

> They are very useful tools (especially for those with only a basic knowledge of the original languages), since they give the reader a view of the formal structure of the Hebrew or Greek. They can be helpful in (1) identifying the structure of the original

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[97] Edward L. Greenstein, "Theories of Modern Bible Translation," *Prooftexts* 3, no. 1 (1983): 11, 13.

> text, (2) identifying Hebrew or Greek idioms and formal patterns of language (some of which have cultural significance), (3) doing word studies, (4) identifying potential ambiguities in a text and (5) tracing formal verbal allusions (which might be obscured by idiomatic renderings). Literal versions are therefore tools (rather than translations) that can provide students with a check on the idiomatic renderings of other versions. Every serious student of the Word should own and use them."[98]

I do not go as far as Strauss and refer to these versions only as tools and not as translations. As will be seen later, Strauss advocates for the NIV which, at times, follows a word-for-word approach also, yet clearly he recognizes it as a translation.

Weaknesses of essentially literal versions. As seen in the history of English Bible translations, focusing on exact word order is not a new phenomenon. Wycliffe's first translation struggled in this same manner. Bruce observes how this initial work by Wycliffe followed a word-for-word approach, "even at the expense of natural English word order."[99] Barger adds, "This rendering of the text made the end result very wooden and unintelligible. The team achieved success in translating into the vernacular, but the insistence upon maintaining a direct quotation hindered the effectiveness of the first translation."[100] Fortunately, the second version published after Wycliffe's death was not so wooden and allowed more of the meaning to come through for the reader.

Modern translations which replicate the original languages in their grammar and word order may fall into the same trap as Wycliffe's first translation. Beekman and Callow write, "The highly literal translation reproduces the linguistic features of the original language with high consistency. The result is a translation which does not adequately communicate the message to a reader who does not know the original

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[98] Mark Strauss, *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation and Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1998), 83.

[99] F. F. Bruce, *History of Bible in English: From the Earliest Versions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 16.

[100] Donald Barger, "Toward the Development of a Bible Storying Evaluation Model Utilizing a Synthesis of Bible Translation Consultation Methods" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 51.

language or who does not have access to commentaries or other reference works."[101] The critical aspect of these authors' point is the necessity of multiple resources. The Berbers of North Africa do not have these necessary works available to benefit from an essentially literal translation.

An example of translating in a manner that was too close to the form occurred in our translation. My translators initially strongly resisted my suggestion to translate the verse, "Greet one another with a holy kiss." Nevertheless, I considered it crucial and pushed this word-for-word translation to the testing phase. However, when we read this version to the ladies who listened to our work and gave feedback, I was in for quite a shock. They burst into laughter and could not stop. The translators laughed, too, and told me, as they had previously, that there is no such thing as a holy kiss in their culture. In America, it might be like saying, "Give your buddy a holy handshake." After much amusement, the word-for-word text was abandoned. Instead, the following version was approved: "Greet each other with a greeting from the Lord." To me, this sounds as strange as a holy kiss, but it has gone through several testing opportunities with little resistance and no outbursts of laughter. While humorous accounts exist in the Bible, such as John outrunning Peter to the tomb, no translator would desire his translation to be considered a comedy.

Overall, a significant weakness of an essentially literal translation among the Berber people is that when following the original languages too closely, the likelihood exists that it will communicate zero meaning, little meaning, or the wrong meaning. Brunn adds, "The challenge of trying to achieve word-for-word translation escalates sharply when we move from English to languages outside of the Indo-European

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[101] Beekman and Callow, *Translating the Word of God*, 21.

family."[102] The Berber languages lie in the Afro-Asiatic Branch, which consists of six main branches.[103] I concur with Brunn, as I have never seen a link to a word in Tamazight and a word in Greek. The vast differences between these branches make it highly unlikely that essentially literal translations communicate a deep meaning. This truth is even more heightened with the Bible when the listeners possess no Christian heritage.

Highly Paraphrastic Versions

The philosophy behind this type of translation shifts the focus from the source language to the target language. Additionally, the idea of inspiration takes place at the meaning level rather than every individual word. Furthermore, highly paraphrastic translations seek to avoid archaic language and use modern wording as much as possible. Strauss observes,

> There is nothing archaic, solemn, or mystical about the kind of language used by the inspired authors of the New Testament. It is the Greek of the street. This says a great deal about the nature of God's revelation. Just as God took on the form of common humanity when he revealed himself as the living Word, so his written Word was revealed in language that the person on the street could understand. This fact alone should convince us to translate Scripture into contemporary, idiomatic English—not an imitation English that artificially mimics patterns and structures of either Greek or Hebrew.[104]

Strauss's comment that Greek was a language of the street was not always espoused. In fact, until the late 1800s, many biblical scholars felt that language of the New Testament was a type of Holy Spirit Greek. Adolf Deissmann writes, "There was a time when the Greek of the New Testament was looked upon as the genuinely classical; it was supposed: that the Holy Spirit, using the apostles merely as a pen, could not but clothe

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[102] Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions*, 16.

[103] For a more in-depth view of the Afro-Asiatic languages, see: "Afro-Asiatic," *Ethnologue*, accessed August 20, 2022, https://www.ethnologue.com/subgroups/afro-asiatic.

[104] Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?*, 86.

His thoughts in the most worthy garb."[105] However, this young German seminary professor drastically changed this view.

Gustav Adolf Deissmann was a privatdozent at Heidelberg University, and he came across a discovery that would alter the thought which prevailed at the time. He happened upon a large quantity of ancient Egyptian papyri written in Greek.[106] Immediately, he noticed the writing was remarkably similar to the original New Testament Greek text. However, these papyri were not only religious in detail but contained writings from many different fields. Deissmann notes he found such works as "wills, marriage contracts, leases, records of legal proceedings, day-to-day officials, private letters, lists, speeches for the prosecution, etc."[107] This discovery proved that the *Koine* Greek of the Bible was, in fact, the same language that was spoken and written by everyday people of the time. The implication is that the Lord did not inspire the biblical writers to pen his Word in a highly academic or literary language. Instead, God has spoken to mankind in ordinary, everyday language.

Strengths of highly paraphrastic versions. Deissmann's discovery helps buttress the argument of using everyday speech and idioms in Bible translation for proponents of highly paraphrastic translations. In the preface to *The Message*, Petersen writes,

> So out of necessity, I became a "translator" (although I wouldn't have called it that), daily standing on the border between two worlds, getting the language of the Bible that God uses to create and save us, heal and bless us, judge and rule

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[105] Adolf Deissmann and A. J. Grieve, *Bible Studies: Contributions, Chiefly from Papyri and Inscriptions, to the History of the Language, the Literature, and the Religion of Hellenistic Judaism and Primitive Christianity* (Edinburgh: T.&T.Clark, 1901), 63.

[106] A brief account is written in Deissman's obituary. See: "Obituary: Prof Deissman- A Great German Theologian," *The London Times* (London, April 6, 1937), accessed July 14, 2022, https://pm20.zbw.eu/mirador/? manifestId=https://pm20.zbw.eu/iiif/folder/pe/003823/manifest.json.

[107] Adolf Deissmann, "The New Biblical Papyri at Heidelberg," *The Expository Times* 17, no. 6 (March 1, 1906): 248.

> over us, into the language of Today that we use to gossip and tell stories, give directions and do business, sing songs and talk to our children.[108]

Therefore, a vital goal of highly paraphrastic translations is to use this type of language to convey the same meaning as the Holy Spirit intended. An example from *The Message* demonstrates this point. Petersen translates, "That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life" (Rom 6: 12).[109] While using modern-day speech, a translation such as *The Message* hopes to transmit the truths of the past to a reader in the present. A quote from Paul out of *The Message* is appropriate here: "So if you speak in a way no one can understand, what's the point of opening your mouth? There are many languages in the world and they all mean something to someone. But if I don't understand the language, it's not going to do me much good" (1 Cor 14: 9–10). In this same way, these highly paraphrastic translations seek to make the language understandable to as many as possible.

Additionally, the translator of highly paraphrastic versions desires that the reader's response be the same as that of the original hearer. The introduction to the New Living Translation (NLT) reads, "The goal of this translation theory is to produce in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text—both in meaning and in style. Such a translation attempts to have the same impact on modern readers as the original had on its own audience."[110] In this type of model, the historical setting of the original writing (i.e., the Israelites in the Sinai Desert) may be replaced with a more impactful expression today (such as outcasts). For Strauss,

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[108] "Preface to The Message ...," accessed June 14, 2022, http://message-for-today.blogspot.com/2014/12/the-message-preface.html.

[109] As a comparison, an example from the ESV reads the same verses as follows: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness," (Rom 6:12-13).

[110] *Holy Bible: New LivingTranslation* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1996), xli.

this style pushes the limits of translation too far. He notes, "The translator must seek to enable the modern reader to hear the text as people living in the first century heard it. This means retaining the historical and cultural aspects of the original as much as possible while translating the language into a contemporary idiom."[111] While powerful in its communicative potential, this modern adaptation of biblical truths may be the tipping point for many who object to highly paraphrastic translations. I will explore this challenge further in the next section. Nevertheless, while translators like Petersen consider this deviation from the original a strength of highly paraphrastic versions, others understand them to be unduly free.

Weaknesses of highly paraphrastic versions. First, in attempting to communicate in today's language, these translations risk removing or adding extraneous information to the text. The Cotton Patch Version certainly meets these criteria. The Bible no longer occurs in Palestine, but rather in the southeastern United States, and John the Baptist is pictured wearing blue jeans and a leather jacket. All of the information from a Middle Eastern Jewish history shifts to a modern, American version. While ostensibly entertaining, this version both removes and adds much to the text.

During the Berber translation project, this challenge occurred when trying to note the time of day when Jesus died. In the original Greek, the text reads that Jesus died around the ninth hour (also found in the KJV, NASB, ESV, NKJV), with time beginning in Palestine at six in the morning (Mark 15:25). Many modern translations read that he was crucified around three in the afternoon (NIV, NET, CEV, HCSB). However, among the Berbers, especially in the countryside, time is not told on a clock but by sunrise, sunset, and Islamic prayer times. Therefore, one national translator, when working alone,

[111] Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?*, 90.

translated the ninth hour as just before the afternoon Islamic prayer (*Asr*).[112] When the group met together, a vivid discussion began. First, the other translators challenged that Islam did not exist until more than 600 years later, so adding this time would be anachronistic. Secondly, if the team put this in the text, they would give credence that Islam is true since, now, with his translation, the Bible testifies to it. For these reasons, the team abandoned the suggestion. However, the translator noted that now, by using an actual time (three in the afternoon), fewer people would understand when Jesus died.

Another potential weakness of highly paraphrastic versions is the changing of historical occurrences by using modern language. Strauss adds,

> If obscurity and poor English are the failings of a literal translation, freer translations sometimes err by moving too far from the author's cultural context or by adding meaning that was not in the mind of the original author. The popular Living Bible (LB) at times loses the cultural setting in its attempt to use contemporary language. Translating "lamps" as "flashlights" (Ps 119:105 LB), a "holy kiss" as "handshakes" (1 Pet 5:14 LB), and "kissed" as "embraced him in friendly fashion" (Mt 26:49 LB) all move away from the historical context and hence away from the author's intended meaning.[113]

In *New Testament: A New Translation* (1934), James Moffatt asked, "This raises one of the numerous points of difficulty that beset the translator. How far is he justified in modernizing an Oriental book?"[114] The answer is not always clear. While changing "lamps" to "flashlights" may go too far, many translations have given modern equivalents to monetary units, weights and measures, and the time of day. These changes occur not only in highly paraphrastic versions but in essentially literal translations. For example, in Luke 12:6, Jesus says that five sparrows are sold for two *assarion* (in Greek). The KJV

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[112] There are five Islamic prayer times each day. The Fajr is the sunrise prayer. The Dhuhr is at mid-day. The Asr is the mid-afternoon prayer. The Maghrib is at sunset. Finally, the Isha prayer is the night-time prayer. For many Muslims around the world, these prayer times have marked the ebb and flow of daily life for more than a millennia.

[113] Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?*, 90.

[114] *The New Testament: A New Translation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), 9, accessed June 18, 2022, http://archive.org/details/newtestamentnewt0000unse.

translated this as two *farthings.*[115] The ESV reads two *pennies*, whereas the NKJV states two copper coins, with a footnote noting *assarion*. Interestingly, the NASB keeps the Greek term *assarion* in the text with an explanatory footnote. However, the NKJV and the NASB note that the value is 1/16th of a day's wage, hardly the value of a quarter today. Furthermore, as currencies increase or decrease in value, what might be a valid translation could change quickly. One quickly sees the challenges and difficulties in using a modern term or leaving an ancient one.

Nevertheless, highly paraphrastic versions risk adding (or removing) information and changing historical events. Still, translators may attempt to bring clarity to the translation at the expense of accuracy. However, as noted about the value of currencies, attaining accuracy is not always as easy as it seems. Since so many idiomatic expressions and cultural activities are entirely Muslim among the Berbers, the danger is that the information added will reinforce Islamic beliefs.

Mediating

The struggle between essentially literal and highly paraphrastic translation is not new. One sees this challenge in early religious works into English as well. Bruce writes,

> One of the earliest of English translators, King Alfred the Great, distinguishes two ways in which translators may go about their work. "I began," he says, "amidst other diverse and manifold cares of the kingdom, to turn into English the book which is called Cura Pastoralis in Latin, and in English, The Shepherd's Book, sometimes word for word, and sometimes meaning for meaning." The history of the English Bible—indeed the history of Bible translation in general—illustrates the conflict between these two ideals in translation. Because of the special religious character and status of the Bible, there have always been those who felt that only a word-for- word translation could do justice to the implications of its divine inspiration. And some translations in fact have been so extremely literal that they can only be understood by reference to the original.[116]

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[115] A farthing was an English coin used from around the twelfth century to the twentieth century. Brunn notes that the value is about a quarter, as the root word is fourth-ing. Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions*, 124n33.

[116] Bruce, *History of Bible in English*, 13.

The struggle of balancing the form and the meaning continues today in both English Bibles and Bibles worldwide. English has seen a proliferation of mediating translations that seek to find the proper equilibrium if such exists. The Christian Standard Bible (CSB) has even termed its work as optimal equivalence. Their translation team adds,

> The term [optimal equivalence] conveys a commitment to both "formal equivalence" (which recognizes the importance of the form of the original language text—that is, the words used and the grammatical and rhetorical structures) and "functional equivalence" (which recognizes the importance of conveying the original message and intent in natural English readily understood by modern readers).[117]

In practice, the commitment to both philosophies produces some essentially literal verses while others are more idiomatic. The same challenge has existed since the beginning of the Berber translation project. There is never an entire book or even chapter that purely follows one philosophy. Even down to the verse level, one may see a variety of translation perspectives. Strauss notes,

> Some Bible translators have adopted the slogan "as literal as possible, as idiomatic as necessary." Inasmuch as there is no loss of meaning, a translation should correspond as closely as possible to the form of the Greek or Hebrew. As soon as formal equivalence results in a loss of meaning, however, the translator must find a more appropriate word or phrase in the receptor language corresponding to the meaning of the original language.[118]

However, even Strauss recognizes the problem that comes with familiarity to the biblical text. Over time, the translators, both foreign and national, can fail to see what is normal in their language and begin to use a more essentially literal model without even knowing it. Strauss continues,

> The main problem with the "as literal as possible" approach is that translators, especially those who are very familiar with the original Greek and Hebrew, often assume that their literal translation is perfectly clear to the common reader, although it represents very awkward or obscure English. A good illustration of

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[117] "Translation Philosophy - CSB," accessed July 20, 2022, https://csbible.com/about-the-csb/translation-philosophy/.

[118] Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?*, 84.

> this can be seen in the retention of the word "of" for the genitive case . . . . Those of us who spend our lives studying Greek and Hebrew and literal Bible translations come to read, think and speak in biblical idiom. We need to remember that, in many cases, these words and expressions do not represent real (clear, readable, contemporary) English, [or any other language].[119]

Therefore, the goal of a mediating approach walks a fine line between form and meaning, newness and familiarity. Again, this balance may not exist in every chapter and verse. Instead, an overall evaluation of the text will tend to be towards the middle of the chart. The goal aims for the readers to understand the language of the text, even if the concepts are profound. The language itself should never be a barrier to understanding. Eco states, "It seems to me that the idea of translation as a process of negotiation (between author and text, between author and readers, as well as between the structure of two languages and the encyclopedias of two cultures) is the only one that matches our experience."[120] From these examples, I understand Bruce, Strauss, and Eco are all suggesting that the best translation is that which uses a mediating approach.

Strengths of mediating versions. Nida defines what a meditating approach seeks to achieve:

> Translating consists in producing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent to the message of the source language, first in meaning and secondly in style. An extremely literal translation is not necessarily the most faithful, for it may actually distort the meaning or even convey no meaning at all . . . . On the other hand, there must be limits to the freedom the translator exercises.[121]

Therefore, a great strength of the mediating approach is the balance it provides between both extremes. If done correctly, this style may avoid the word-for-word approach on the one side and the unduly free on the other. Brunn notes, "Since form and meaning are both

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[119] Strauss, *Distorting Scripture?*, 85.

[120] Eco, *Mouse or Rat*, 34.

[121] Nida and Taber, *Theory and Practice of Translation*, 12.

integral, it could be difficult to argue that one is more important than the other. In every language there is an inseparable partnership between the two. Each form is worthless without its meaning, and meaning can be communicated only by some kind of form."[122] The success of a project ends up as a range on the spectrum rather than a precise location. This broader scope removes the pressure that a translator may feel that every verse must be meditating. Instead, there will be an ebb and flow between occasional word-for-word, more paraphrastic, and mediating translations. Of course, when the target language is relationally further from the source language, the less common word-for-word translations will effectively communicate the meaning of the text.

While this balanced approach avoids the far extremes of the spectrum, it may also allow the translator to leave critical aspects of the form to remain when he feels it is necessary for understanding. Similarly, he can avoid language structures that are archaic in contemporary language. As seen with αγάπη in 1 Corinthians 13, the repetition of the form is critical and can be allowed in a mediating approach. Paul's usage of αγάπη emphasizes a contrast between God's love and mankind's. However, an example in the original texts of avoidance is the use of bowels as the inner seat of emotions, such as in Paul's letter to Philemon. An essentially literal translation in English does not communicate the original meaning in a verse such as, "The bowels of the saints are refreshed by you brethren" (Phlm 7). This translation would most likely elicit a humorous response. Instead, the ability to flex and move to a more idiomatic translation can effectively connect the truths of the original with the language of today, hopefully without fits of laughter. Among the Berbers, the kidneys are the seat of emotions. Not always being bound to one particular philosophy allows the translator to give a more precise meaning when needed.

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[122] Brunn, *One Bible, Many Versions*, 38.

Weaknesses of mediating versions. The weakness of this approach exists in the following example. A pastor, illiterate in the original languages, would like to use his mediating translation to see what is happening in Greek. Paul writes to the church in Rome concerning the importance of Christians submitting to governments. An example from the ESV in Romans reads, "for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain" (Rom 13:4a). That same verse in the NLT reads, "But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you." A student unable to compare with the Greek will miss the allusion to a sword used throughout the Bible. The importance, therefore, lies in giving pastors and students the tools they need. In reality, multiple translations are necessary. As a pastor and good friend, Jack Peters notes, "The first translation should not be the last." This advice is certainly accurate among the Berber PGs also. There are no pastors that I know of who can read the Bible in the original languages. Therefore, the need for a more essentially literal does indeed exist as a subsequent translation project.

Another weakness can come from the translation team, which over time, may drift more towards a word-for-word approach without realizing it, even though a mediating approach is the range they are attempting to produce. As biblical language becomes more familiar to both the translators and the listeners, these types of structures can creep their way into the text and begin to sound normal. Hence, the need remains to test the text with those who have never heard it. When first-time listeners of the Bible can understand the language (not necessarily the concepts), the translators have done well. Unfortunately, translators may forget this crucial goal. Nida notes that a young student reading a more idiomatic Bible for the first time told her mother it could not be the Bible. Her mother asked why and she told her mother it was because she could understand it.[123] The translator(s) must constantly remain vigilant against language that drifts towards

[123] Eugene A. Nida, "Paradoxes of Translating," *Bible Translator* 42, no. 2a (April 1991): 10.

essentially literal or highly paraphrastic if those approaches carry zero, little, or the wrong meaning.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed several Bible translation spectrums, theories, and the philosophies behind those theories. Furthermore, I have explored three main approaches to translation: essentially literal, highly paraphrastic, and mediating. In my opinion, over the past twenty years of Bible translation, I see that the mediating approach is more beneficial for the Berber PGs. While the essentially literal translation has value for those pastors or students who have many resources in their languages, the Berber PGs do not. Furthermore, the churches are small and scattered, while pastors often know little about the Bible.

Highly paraphrastic versions may communicate in contemporary language yet can add information or change historical data. This approach can quickly lead people astray for cultures that know very little of the Bible. Instead, they know Islam, and their conclusions will return to these previous notions.

Translators among Berber PGs should initially translate using a mediating approach to achieve the best comprehension. Later works may be produced that lean more toward formal or functional equivalents. The audience determines which type of translation is most needed. Eventually, the optimum approach is to have multiple Tamazight versions that the Berbers can consult.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXTUALIZATION AND RELEVANCE THEORY IN BIBLE TRANSLATION

Contextualization is the process of retaining the message of the gospel in reaching a people group while simultaneously adjusting the means, tone, language, and delivery, according to their culture and needs. Although contextualization reaches into many forms of communication, it is undeniably a vital part of Bible translation. As the early church spread beyond the Mediterranean region, they came into contact with new languages, thus beginning the need for Bible translation. Lamin Sanneh writes, "Without translation, there would be no Christianity or Christians. Translation is the church's birthmark as well as its missionary benchmark: the church would be unrecognizable or unsustainable without it."[1] Translation is the passage through which God's eternal message is made available and contextualized to those who do not speak the original languages of the Bible. Sanneh's statement is a beautiful example of contextualization. David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen add,

> The missionary's ultimate goal in communication has always been to present the supracultural message of the gospel in culturally relevant terms. There are two potential hazards which must be assiduously avoided in this endeavor: (1). the perception of the communicator's own cultural heritage as an integral element of the gospel, and (2). syncretistic inclusion of elements from the receptor culture, which would alter or eliminate aspects of the message upon which the integrity of the gospel depends.[2]

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[1] Lamin O. Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel beyond the West* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 97.

[2] David Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 1.

In keeping with the idea of spectrums, as seen in the previous chapter, contextualization aims to avoid the extreme ends of introducing foreign culture as synonymous with Christianity or syncretizing Christianity with local culture. The missionary must seek a balanced and acceptable median between these two polar ends.

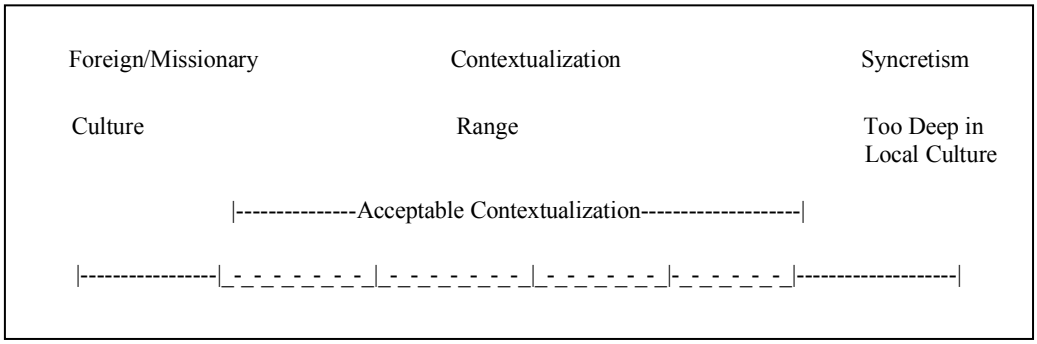

Figure 7. Contextualization ranges

It is difficult to prescribe an exact location on this figure where contextualization *must* occur. Instead, the missionary's objective is to land within the acceptable range and strive to remain there during his or her ministry. The church in Galatia demonstrates an example of beginning well (working in the acceptable range) but later turning from truth to the excessive doctrines of the Judaizers. Paul writes, "You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" (Gal 5:7). On the other hand, the church in Thessalonica models a group that shifted from idol worship to belief in the gospel. Paul writes, "They tell how you turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess 1:9). Missionaries have often met with many failures, holding to one of these extreme positions. Recognizing a balanced approach places one in an acceptable contextualization range, which can produce eternal results for the Kingdom of God.

In this chapter, I first present several examples in the New Testament which allow today's translators to observe how the biblical writers contextualized the message for their particular audience. Second, I examine three missionary histories, analyzing their successes and failures. Third, I explore several contemporary models, ending with contextualization among the Berbers. Nevertheless, these examples are not to be considered prescriptive for every circumstance.

Contextualization in the New Testament

The first example I analyze is the gospel writer Matthew. Although the writer's audience is not positively known, critical evidence supports that the Jews were his target. Today, scholars seek to discover clues in the text that reveal authorial intention using a process similar to reverse engineering.[3] As Matthew made certain contextualized statements, scholars take those statements and conclude that he wrote to the Jews. Anna-Case Winters asserts, "There are a number of elements in this Gospel that have led interpreters to refer to Matthew as 'the Jewish Gospel.'"[4] She continues, "The claim that Jesus is the Messiah and the authoritative teacher of the law is the major point of

[3] The process of discovering an author's target audience is similar to reverse engineering in which the engineer takes a manufactured product, disassembles it, and seeks to understand its design. Similarly, one takes the examples from the gospel today, observing structure such as language, vocabulary, and references to people or places while attempting to rebuild the audience the author was addressing. The lack of specific references might indicate that the author perceives his audience as having previous knowledge, further indicating to whom the author might be addressing. For example, when Moses writes of the Nile River in the book of Exodus, he refers to this body of water as "the river." He perceives his audience will understand to which river he is referring, seeing no need to specify further. Andrew Wilson and Shawna Dolansky write, "The English word 'Nile' derives from the river's Greek name, *Neilos*, and its Latin name, *Nilus*. In the Hebrew Bible, there is no proper noun or title for this river: the Nile is often simply referred to as 'the river' (e.g., Gen 41:1) or 'the river of Egypt' (e.g., Amos 8:8). This Hebrew word used for river here may derive from the generic Egyptian word for river. Following the Hebrew, the Septuagint does not use the specific word *Neilos*, which appears in other ancient Greek texts. However, modern English translations typically insert the word Nile where it is implied." Andrew Wilson and Shawna Dolansky, "Nile," Bible Odyssey, 2022, https://www.bibleodyssey.org/places/related-articles/nile#contrib_wilson-andrew.

[4] Anna Case-Winters, *Matthew: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Presbyterian, 2015), 6.

difference. The extension of the promises of God to Gentiles is a second contentious point. Matthew's way of arguing these points is thoroughly grounded in the Scriptures and traditions of Judaism."[5] As an eyewitness, Matthew relates the same story as the other three Gospel writers but crafts it for his particular audience. Hesselgrave adds that Matthew also emphasizes "kingship, the divine titles of Jesus, and the Aramaisms which characterize his Jewish-Greek language."[6] He contextualizes his message by using the themes and language of the Jewish people he targets. Conversely, he disagrees with their assumptions and instead points, with clarity, to the Messiah's purposeful death, burial, and resurrection. Therefore, although Matthew does not change the message of Jesus, he uses a different method and vocabulary, ultimately revealing to the Jews the true nature of their long-awaited Messiah.

The second example of contextualization in the New Testament comes from Luke's book of Acts. Dean Flemming writes, "The language and content of Acts suggest that Luke's primary target audience would have been Greek-speaking Gentiles, especially those familiar enough with the Septuagint to appreciate Luke's frequent allusions to the Scriptures and their fulfillment."[7] Luke seeks to convince his Gentile readers of the message so elusive to God's chosen people throughout their history. Interestingly, the first nine chapters focus on a thoroughly Jewish people within the early church. As the story moves forward, a definite shift occurs within the apostolic community, carrying their understanding of the Gospel beyond the descendants of Abraham to the entire human race. Harold E. Dollar writes, "Consequently, each episode in these chapters, with the exception of chapter twelve, advances this movement in the direction of the Gentiles until

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[5] Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 6.

[6] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 8.

[7] Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009), 28.

the leadership explicitly announces this accomplishment in chapter fifteen."[8] Both Flemming and Dollar view this shift as "the gospel's journey from Jewish particularism to inclusivism."[9]

Therefore, Luke presents a context in which the Gentiles were always in God's plan of salvation. As the apostles grow in their understanding of the Lord's plan, this shift towards inclusivism also begins for them. The Gentiles would be heirs of the Messiah along with the Jews. The Old Testament points to the Messiah being the Savior of all mankind.[10] There are few texts more clearly stating this promise than Isaiah 49:6:

> It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
> To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
> I will also make You a light of the nations
> So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Nevertheless, the Jews, in their selfish attitude as God's people, did not grasp the vastness of God's plan, which was to reach all nations under the heavens. Hesselgrave adds, "Because of its ethnocentric orientation, the Old Testament covenant community appears largely to have ignored any missionary responsibility it may have had."[11] Therefore, Luke reaffirms the same message God gave to Abraham thousands of years previous: "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Gen 12:3b).

A third example of contextualization in the New Testament lies with the apostle Paul. In much of the latter part of his ministry, Paul finds himself with Gentile people and realizes his need to contextualize his message. He no longer focuses solely on the Jews, and many early arguments would have little persuasion among his new hearers. For example, in his epistle to Titus, who is on the island of Crete, Paul quotes the Cretan

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[8] Harold E. Dollar, *A Biblical-Missiological Exploration of the Cross-Cultural Dimensions in Luke-Acts* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1993), 115.

[9] Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament*, 31–32.

[10] See Gen 12:3; 18:18; Lev 24:22; Pss 22:27–28; 86:9; Isa 9:1–2; 11:10; 42:6; 56:6–8; 60:1–3; Dan 7:14; Hos 2:23; Amos 9:11–12.

[11] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 7.

philosopher Epimenides. This same reasoning would have had little influence on the Jews in Jerusalem. Additionally, to the Athenians, Paul quotes both Epimenides and the Cilician Stoic philosopher Aratus (Acts 17:27–29). George A. Thompson writes concerning Paul's contextualization,

> Yet, his methodology in Athens differs from other occasions, for instance, his preaching in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (cf. Acts 13:14–41). In Acts 13 Paul's audience is Jewish, schooled in the Old Testament . . . . Here in Acts 17 Paul displays sensitivity to his audience. He avoids direct references to Scripture; instead, he quotes two familiar Greek poets, Epimenides of Crete and Aratus of Cilicia.[12]

Once again, Aratus would have been an unimportant character to Jews under Roman rule. To the Jews, Abraham and Moses provided the essential words from the past. However, as he works with these Gentile cultures, Paul introduces biblical concepts from these hearers' own perspectives. Nevertheless, Paul refuses to leave his audience in ambiguity. His message in Acts 17:22–31 clearly points to Christ. Luke writes, "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17: 31). Matthew, Luke, and Paul all take the same message of the gospel and change their method of delivery so that, as Paul writes, "by all possible means, I might save some" (1 Cor 9:22).

Hesselgrave and Rommen's Three-fold Process

Hesselgrave and Rommen note how they believe the Bible demonstrates a contextualized approach. These authors present a three-fold process: revelation, interpretation, and application.[13] I examine each of these in light of several New Testament passages.

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[12] George A. Thompson, "Acts 17:16-34 as Paradigm in Responding to Postmodernity," *In die Skriflig* 39, no. 4 (December 2005): 711–12.

[13] For further reading see Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 201–2.

Revelation. Hesselgrave and Rommen suggest that contextualization originates with communication:

> The process begins with God's revelation of his truth in language. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a human author, using linguistic symbols to convey the meaning of that revelation, produced a text. Since the inscripturation of revealed truth took place under the direct inspiration of God's Spirit, the correspondence between that which was revealed and the resultant text is guaranteed.[14]

Therefore, the appropriate language chosen for their audience and the freedom found in the Holy Spirit allowed the authors to contextualize their message.

First, as an example of Hesselgrave and Rommen's statement above, each of the authors (Matthew, Luke, and Paul) revealed their works in the Greek language. This act is an example of contextualization, for although they observed conversations and events in Aramaic, they chose a different language of communication. Possibly, Matthew and Paul could have related all that they observed in Hebrew, but neither did so. Although Aramaic may have been the preferred *spoken* language of the Jews at the time, it seems that Greek was the preferred language in which one would choose to *read*. The translation of the LXX demonstrates how even Aramaic-speaking Jews needed the Hebrew Scriptures in a language more relevant for the times. Richard Ottley attests,

> The conquered Jews and the conquering Greeks were both dispersed among the "nations" and the "barbarians." Over the regions where these two dispersions coincided . . . was no greater centre than Alexandria, where Greek influence was of the strongest, and where there was for many generations a large and generally thriving Jewish element. These Jews, the more when concentrated in a Greek city, naturally came to learn the Greek language, and in time to forget their own; and the result was, that they came to have absolute need of a Greek version of their Scriptures.[15]

Therefore, these biblical writers specifically chose Greek, demonstrating how they sought to put their writings into the context of their audience.

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[14] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 201.

[15] Richard R. Ottley, *A Handbook to the Septuagint* (New York: Dutton, 1920), 36.

Second, I agree with Hesselgrave and Rommen that the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew, Luke, and Paul's writings, as the Scriptures themselves testify how this revelation occurred. Peter writes, "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 1:20–21). The same Holy Spirit allowed each writer to express the truth in a natural and specific style for their readers. For Matthew and Luke, the texts are not identical copies of one another but reveal details consistent with how eyewitnesses report the same event.[16] Nevertheless, each of these writers must have felt that, whether Jew or Gentile, each had the right to hear the gospel in the most precise language relevant to their worldview.

For Matthew, the revelation would demonstrate a Messiah who would not come as the Jews had expected—a warrior king who would rid Israel of despots. Case-Winters notes,

> The messianic expectations envisioned someone with wonder-working power who would overthrow Israel's oppressors and restore the Davidic monarchy. Matthew presents instead a more humble and more human figure . . . Jesus is a trusting and obedient child of God who does not seek to be an exception to the human condition through special provision, protection, and power. This passage, for Matthew, is definitive as a revelation of what kind of messiah this Jesus will be.[17]

Matthew, a Jew himself, certainly had heard the tales of how the Messiah would ride in and save the day. However, without changing the message that Jesus presented, he allows his readers to know that this Messiah is far more than they could have imagined. Matthew's revelation of the Messiah often points back to how Christ is the fulfillment of

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[16] When Lee Strobel went through his investigation into Christianity, eventually published as *The Case for Christ*, he wondered about inconsistencies in the text. He interviewed one of the most knowledgeable men on the resurrection, William Lane Craig. Craig notes if two witnesses reported a word-for-word testimony, it would be thrown out as false or plagiarized evidence. Thus, the differences in the Gospels reflect the same core message yet contextualized for different audiences. For further reading see Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 287–91.

[17] Case-Winters, *Matthew*, 67–68.

the Hebrew prophecies. He writes, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel,' which means 'God with us'" (Matt 1:22–23). He understands that his readers need previously trusted texts to reveal who Jesus is and why he has come.

As Luke contextualizes, he concentrates on one particular aspect throughout Acts. He displays God's power among Jews and Gentiles in signs and wonders. Perhaps, Luke's focus on miracles among both peoples was to allow his Hellenistic readers to know in a tangible way that they were also chosen. Although Luke's Gentile readers may have been familiar with the LXX, they had no long-written history of how God had provided for them over thousands of years, unlike their Jewish counterparts. However, these miracles provided an undeniable witness to both Jew and Gentile that the Lord was working among them. One can imagine the amazement when the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household in the presence of Jewish witnesses (Acts 10:44–48). Peter then convinces the circumcised in Jerusalem of the incredible work that God had accomplished. Luke notes, "When they heard this they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life'" (Acts 11:18). As a side note, with the composition of Acts, there no longer remained an unwritten history. Instead, future Gentile believers would have written access to the miracles of the Lord and how he received all peoples to himself.

Moreover, in noting these signs and wonders among the Gentiles, Luke does not cast aside the Jew. He could have easily focused solely on this new work that the Lord was accomplishing among the uncircumcised. Yet Luke realizes the significance of balancing the continued plan of the old promises with the unimaginable working of the new ones. Flemming argues, "In important ways, then, Acts is an intercultural document. It transposes a story that is grounded in Hebrew Scriptures, as well as the Jewish identity

of Jesus and the early Jerusalem church, into a Greco-Roman cultural setting."[18] Luke's inclusion of the Lord's wondrous miracles in Acts ties together the love of God to all peoples. One sees Luke delighting in the new work among the Gentiles while still noting Yahweh's plan for the Jews. Luke admits the outward rejection of Christ by many of the circumcised yet demonstrates God's retention of a remnant among his people.

In Paul's encounter with the Athenians, he reveals the truth of Christ with a bridge from their worldview. Upon seeing the idols which pervaded the city, he becomes greatly distressed. Although he had reasoned in the Athenian synagogue, presumably from the Hebrew Scriptures, in the Areopagus, Paul turns to the very idols which had troubled him. His strategy was successful as Luke writes, "Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed" (Acts 17:34). Bonaventura Priyo Sutejo and R. F. Bhanu Viktorahadi suggest, "Of course, Paul's argument sounded familiar to his Areopagus audience. Therefore, the understanding that God is close to humans and plays a role in human life is increasingly acceptable. These quotations are also a strategy used by Paul to explain his argument about God."[19] Therefore, Paul chooses to reveal the truth of Christ *initially* in a familiar manner, a way that makes sense in their context. However, after building this bridge, Paul leads them to the cross and the resurrection.

In all of these circumstances, one sees a balanced, mediating approach. Matthew, Luke, and Paul purposefully avoid extreme positions. Their strategy allows their audience, both Jew and Gentile, to grasp God's magnificent plan.

Interpretation. Hellelgrave's and Rommen's second process in biblical contextualization is interpretation. They describe the progression: "The second element is

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[18] Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament*, 29.

[19] Bonaventura Priyo Sutejo and R. F. Bhanu Viktorahadi, "The Relevance of Paul's Preaching Activities in Athens to the Preaching of the Church Based on Acts 17:16–34," *Khazanah Sosial* 4, no. 1 (March 2022): 153.

the reader's or hearer's perception of the intended meaning. The formation of this perceived meaning is affected by the two horizons of the interpretive task—the horizon of the interpreter's own culture and that of the text."[20] Those reading Matthew, Luke, and Paul had their own filters, and their worldview greatly affected their interpretation. Nevertheless, when recounting a historical event, a writer must present the facts as they occurred. Ernst Wendland suggests, "The very nature of verbal discourse makes it imperative that a reader or hearer make use of the context of a given text (oral or written) when seeking to understand the message being communicated."[21] Thus, with a great desire for their readers to hear and receive the message, each author wrote to a particular audience's context yet kept the validity of the original message intact.

Matthew writes to Jewish Christians but ostensibly to Jews who had not yet converted. Therefore, his argument must be convincing as their interpretation is through a Jewish lens. Two significant examples he notes are the guarding of the tomb of Christ and the subsequent bribery of the guards. As no other Gospel writer includes these pericopes, Matthew demonstrates his understanding of how Jews will rationalize the empty tomb. The existing argument was that the disciples came and stole the body while the guards were sleeping (Matt 28:13). Matthew notes that at the time of his writing his Gospel, "this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day" (Matt 28:15b). Donald Hagner comments that this "raises the awkward question of how they knew what happened if they were sleeping, not to mention the fact that they would have had to be sleeping extremely soundly if they were not able to hear the large stone being rolled away from the door of the tomb."[22] Matthew purposefully addresses the argument

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[20] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 202.

[21] Ernst Wendland, "Temple Site or Cemetery? A Question of Perspective," *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 5, no. 1 (1992): 37.

[22] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33b (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 876–77.

and replaces the error with the proper context. His contextualization serves as a warrant for his readers wondering if Christ indeed rose from the dead. He does not add false details to the story, yet he knows his audience well enough to answer the question he knows they will ask.

Luke records a detailed example of *misinterpretation* concerning Paul and Barnabas's work in Acts 14. Not all events go as planned for missionaries, even the apostle Paul. Nevertheless, Luke could have left out the story of Paul's failure to communicate as he intended. After escaping a plot in Iconium to receive mistreatment and stoning, the duo arrived in Lystra. As he was preaching, he noticed a man lame from birth. The man listened to Paul intently, and seeing that he had "faith to be healed [Paul] called out, 'Stand up on your feet!' At that, the man jumped up and began to walk" (Acts 14: 9–10). Indeed, this event must have been exciting for the man, Paul, and all who observed it.

Luke notes the crowd's reaction, "When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in human form'" (v. 11). Amidst the excitement, Paul and Barnabas had no idea what was happening since they did not speak Lycaonian. Additionally, the priest of Zeus wanted to offer sacrifices to the two men as gods. Eckhard Schnabel writes, "Paul understood both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures. He was at least bilingual, probably trilingual: he was fluent in Aramaic and in Greek, and in all probability also in Hebrew. He was evidently able to function comfortably, without consciously 'crossing over' into one or the other culture, both in Jewish culture and in Greco-Roman culture."[23] However, for the first time recorded in Paul's ministry, one sees him in a foreign language setting. Paul and

[23] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2010), 329.

Barnabas could not initially address the misunderstanding as neither comprehended the Lycaonian context.

Hellelgrave and Rommen note that mankind's culture affects their understanding. The crowd at Lystra construes the event through their worldview as one of the Roman gods. An essential concept of interpretation is testing people's perceptions. Katherine Barnwell states, concerning translation, "The translation must be exposed to the reaction of the people for whom it is written. There is no other way to judge whether it really does communicate the message."[24] Don Barger adds, "Clarity is determined by evaluating how the representative hearers of the people group receive the translation for the first time."[25] For Paul, this was not a written text which could be tested. Unfortunately, in this case, Paul failed to communicate his intended message accurately. The critical lesson is that one does not know how a text or an event will be understood until testing occurs. One must see how people interpret the text or, in Paul's case, the action of healing. The syncretism of the priests and crowds of Lystra led to incorrect assumptions concerning the incredible miracle performed through Paul. Charles Kraft suggests, "What they 'heard,' based on their interpretation of the apostles' activity, was the only message that got across, even though it was quite different from the one sent."[26]

Misunderstandings such as these occur daily for missionaries worldwide in different cultural, linguistic, and translation situations. Upon reflection after being stoned, one wonders if Paul might have healed the same man in a more private manner. This healed man is the only one who profits from the entire event. Knowing how an audience

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[24] Katy Barnwell, "Testing the Translation," *Bible Translator* 28, no. 4 (April 1977): 425.

[25] Donald Barger, "Toward the Development of a Bible Storying Evaluation Model Utilizing a Synthesis of Bible Translation Consultation Methods" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 26.

[26] Charles H. Kraft, *Communication Theory for Witness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 110.

will interpret or misinterpret a text can help the writer, or translator, provide proper contextualization.

Application. The third segment of Hesselgrave's and Rommen's biblical contextualization process is application. They write, "Acceptable contextualization is a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation. The results of this process may vary in form and intensity, but they will always remain within the scope of meaning prescribed by the biblical text."[27] Matthew, Luke, and Paul all demonstrate how their audience can apply the biblical message.

Matthew demonstrates this opportunity for application in 6:1–8, 16–18, where Jesus focuses on avoiding hypocrisy. His desire is for the hearer to listen and obey. In these texts, Matthew's target audience is Jews, possibly even those who are followers of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Although many of these religious Jews are considered righteous on the exterior, they have become masters in hypocrisy. Interestingly, at that time, a common meaning of the word υποκριται (hypocrite) was an actor. These characters would put on masks and act out different roles or altered personalities. Dan Via suggests, "In the Septuagint and Hellenistic Jewish literature, hupokritēs generally had the pejorative connotation of intentional deception."[28] Therefore, Jesus likely was insinuating to his hearers that the Pharisees and Sadducees were intentionally deceiving their followers.

In Matthew's examples of Jesus's teaching, he risks failing to communicate the proper application. Jesus certainly spotlights the significance of both fasting and giving to the needy. However, Matthew was not communicating that the Sadducees and

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[27] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 202.

[28] Dan Via, *Self-Deception and Wholeness in Paul and Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1990), 92.

Pharisees were model citizens even though they assiduously fasted and gave according to the law. Instead, the point of Jesus's teaching is that one is called to help the poor and to fast in a spirit of humility. Matthew desires his Jewish audience to recognize the importance of doing these actions in secret.

In the Gospel of Luke, he demonstrates his application point in recounting Jesus's arrest in the garden. After the resurrection of Christ, Luke understood that anti-Jewish sentiment could have become a reality, even among believers. Thus, he records an example for Gentiles who might harbor ill will toward the Jews. In the garden of Gethsemane, a violent mob of Jewish leaders approaches Jesus. After Judas kisses Jesus, Peter bears his sword and cuts off Malchus's ear. At this point, Luke has every opportunity to relate the story as Matthew and John do, telling Peter to put the sword away. However, Luke, the physician, adds that Jesus heals the man's ear, thus demonstrating Jesus's goodwill even to his enemies.

Luke records Christ's answer to any anti-Semitic attitudes that may have arisen: a response of healing and forgiveness. He allows his audience to apply this lesson correctly. Joseph Tyson adds, "This shifts a burden to the reader, who, when considering Jews and Judaism, has the responsibility to decide among pity, hatred, appreciation, and other possible responses."[29] Nevertheless, Christ's response was to model forgiveness at the hands of the Jews. Indeed, the most poignant example is Christ hanging on a cross, naked, facing ridicule, and crying out, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Once again, Luke is the only Gospel writer who records this instance of Jesus's mercy and forgiveness toward the Jewish leaders. Luke records this recounting of the rejected Messiah offering pardon as an example for his Hellenistic

[29] Joseph B. Tyson, "Luke, Judaism, and Anti-Judaism," Bible Interp, Southern Methodist University, August 2010, https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/luke357926.

audience to do the same. There could be no place among believers to harbor any anti-Semitic resentment, seeing how Christ himself did not.

Similarly, Luke allows his readers to emulate the Bereans' example in the book of Acts. In chapter 17, Paul continues to share the gospel in the synagogues as his primary means of evangelism. Luke records that Paul follows the same model in Berea and finds excellent reception. The text reads, "Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). Eckhard Schnabel suggests, "The temporal phrase 'daily' does not describe the frequency of the regular meetings in the synagogue of the entire Jewish community but the frequency of Paul's interaction with Berean Jews. Their interest was such that every day some Jewish people were willing and eager to discuss with Paul the content of his message."[30] However, the text continues and includes not only the Jews but the Gentiles as well: "As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men" (Acts 17:12). Therefore, Paul demonstrates a model for his audience to emulate, not only in evangelizing the Jews but also in reaching the Gentiles as well. Again, this pattern of mediation appears in Paul's actions. While ministering to one group, he consistently recognizes the needs of the other.

I believe that Matthew, Luke, and Paul all demonstrate the three-fold process of biblical contextualization set forth by Hesselgrave and Rommen. They contextualize for their respective audiences in ways that seek to communicate clearly without leading to syncretism. Hesselgrave and Rommen posit, "With the completion of Christ's work of salvation and the resultant gospel, early believers began the process of establishing a basis and specific strategies for overcoming intercultural obstacles. Once those initial

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[30] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 710.

steps were taken, the task was passed on to subsequent generations of believers."[31] The models shown by these two Gospel writers and Paul give vital examples of surmounting these challenges using contextualization, which future believers could and did use to spread the ministry and teachings of Christ around the world.

Bible translators among the Berbers face similar challenges as those seen above. Translation teams desire to communicate the truths of the gospel, yet many barriers exist, such as language, culture, and worldview. Certainly, there may still be misunderstandings, yet these biblical writers offer a mediating approach that allows the Holy Spirit to work and breathe into a people needing life. Local beliefs can serve as bridges, yet the truth of God's Word can correct erroneous teachings.

Contextualization in History

Every translation since the early church departed from its root location in Palestine could serve as an example of contextualization. Each group of people had its own context and needed methods adapted to their particular setting. The closer to the early church's location, language, and original culture, the less contextualization was necessary. Hesselgrave and Rommen insert several essential factors concerning the early believers:

> (1) "The church seems to have considered its primary responsibility to have been fulfilled when the outer perimeters of the Roman Empire had been reached." (2)"The missionary task was carried out within a limited and clearly defined geographic area which was already saturated with Roman culture." (3)"In this way, the early church was able to avoid much of the contextualization needed in the modern missionary movement . . . i.e., language, culture, different climate, different form of government." (4) "Wherever they went they encountered not only the same external structures, but also the same fundamental mind-set, the collective Roman psyche." [32]

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[31] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 11.

[32] These points are taken from Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 12–13.

Karl Holl observes, "The believers carried the gospel 'not to foreign lands,' but to their own countrymen. They presented it not in some foreign language, which had first to be learned, but rather in their own mother tongue."[33] However, as the missionary movement went beyond the Roman Empire, culture, language, and worldview began to look vastly different. In this section, I examine three missionary endeavors demonstrating the vast challenges each one faced and how they contextualized the message for more effective ministry.

Pope Gregory the Great and Augustine, Bishop of Canterbury

An early example of contextualization arises from the heartbreak of the slavery markets shortly after the Roman Empire's demise. Homes Dudden recounts how Pope Gregory the Great witnessed the sale of young Britons in a slave market in Rome. His sorrow moved him towards action, and he appointed a monk by the name of Augustine to gather a following to take the gospel to the land of the Angles.[34]

The journey proved more challenging than expected, and the small band decided to give up. However, Stephen Neill explains that the group continued upon Gregory's encouragement. The Venerable Bede (d. 735) notes that the monks' arrival in Britain was met with surprising success. They were not there long before some pagans converted, and their numbers began to grow. Nevertheless, there were still areas where they needed guidance. Augustine sent extensive letters to Gregory asking for his advice and how to adjust their methods for the Angle people. A letter sent by Pope Gregory to

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[33] Karl Holl, "Die Missionsmethode der alten und die der mittelalterlichen Kirche," ed. H. Frohnes and U. Knorr, *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte* 1 (1974): 3.

[34] Dudden relates the full story in his book: F. Homes Dudden, *Gregory the Great: His Place in History and Thought*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, 1905), 195–96.

the Abbott Mellitus highlights some of the contextualization models the monks were to implement.[35] Bede writes,

> Almighty God shall bring you to the most reverend [sic] Bishop Augustine, our brother, tell him what I have, upon mature deliberation on the affair of the English, determined upon, viz., that the temples of the idols in that nation ought not to be destroyed; but let the idols that are in them be destroyed; let holy water be made and sprinkled in the said temples, let altars be erected, and relics placed.[36]

Ostensibly, Augustine would have sought to destroy the temples and rebuild them as churches. However, Gregory recognized the buildings themselves were of no spiritual value; instead, the brethren who made up the church were of real value. Unfortunately, he implemented holy relics, which replaced one form of syncretism with another. Despite this mistake, with great insight, Gregory suggests, "For if those temples are well-built, it is requisite that they be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and knowing and adoring the true God, may the more familiarly resort to the places to which they have been accustomed."[37] Thus, familiar everyday places could serve as bridges in the lives of the Angles and did not need to be replaced by foreign buildings.

Another vital context that Gregory addresses is the sacrifice of animals to devils. Again, the Pope suggests that the activity is neutral, but the focus of the sacrifice needs to be adjusted. He posits, "No more offer beasts to the Devil, but kill cattle to the praise of God in their eating, and return thanks to the Giver of all things for their

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[35] Venerable Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, book 1 (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1910), 52–53, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.24760/page/n89/mode/2up?view=theater.

[36] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52.

[37] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52–53.

sustenance."[38] He concludes his letter to Mellitus by noting that syncretism will exist among their converts but that the Lord will remove these areas "by degrees or steps, and not by leaps."[39] Therefore, although challenges occurred, the monks succeeded in staving off the desire to keep pagan practices, turning them into Christian traditions over time.

Bartholomew Ziegenbald and Heinrich Plütschau

In 1705, early missionaries Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Heinrich Plütschau arrived in Tranquebar, India, by orders of the Danish King. Neither of them had prior knowledge of the Indian people nor their culture before sailing. Before arriving, they had never met a non-Christian. For training, they began to study Johann Freylinghausen's method of systematic theology. The goal was to evangelize the Indian people with a European form of logic.[40] On the contextualization range (fig. 3), this form of evangelism and church planting would be on the far left of the spectrum. Despite their initial failure, their aim to share Christ came from the most sincere desire. Ziegenbald and Plütschau wrote, "How can we proclaim to another, that which has taken possession of our hearts?"[41] Nevertheless, their attempts to reach the lost were sputtering. Hesselgrave and Rommen insert,

> It did not take long for the missionaries themselves to discover the inadequacies of this method. On the one hand their approach to preaching introduced the very specialized language and vocabulary of one segment of European Christianity, which even when accurately translated, often remained unintelligible. On the other

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[38] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52–53.

[39] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 52–53.

[40] It is difficult to imagine what Ziengenbalg and Plütschau undertook in their ministry in India in the early eighteenth century. To attain a small idea of the amount of context these men faced, see Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg, *Genealogy of the South Indian Gods* (Madras, India, 1869). In this work, Ziengenbalg describes the Hindu beliefs in gods, multiple levels of deities, and their wives, demons, and religious rites associated with such beings. It is no wonder these missionaries faced such tremendous challenges upon arrival to the sub-continent.

[41] Karl Müller, *200 Jahre Brüdermission* (Herrnhut, Germany: Verlag der Missionbuchhandlung, 1931), 301.

> hand, they realized that this approach tended to ignore the physical and social needs of their listeners.[42]

The men contacted their mission board, notifying them of the poverty and desperation in their location. However, the initial response was not so receptive. Neill avers, "Ziegenbalg made a careful study of the actual religious beliefs of the people of South India and sent the results of his researches [sic] home to Europe. He received the tart reply that his business was to root out Hinduism in India, and not to propagate heathen superstition in Europe."[43] However, Ziegenbalg's insistence and longsuffering paid off. He persuaded his patrons that several adjustments needed to be put in context before moving forward with the ministry. One of the first changes was to attempt to build institutions to assist orphans and their education. Neill attests to four areas in which the men modified their work to see fruit among the Tamil people.[44] (1) Both church and school were necessary to see Christianity grow. (2) The Bible needed to be available in their language.[45] (3) "The preaching of the Gospel must be based on accurate knowledge of the mind of the people." (4) "At as early a date as possible, an Indian Church, with its own Indian ministry, must come into being." While commonplace by today's standards, these principles set the missionary movement forward among the Tamil people with new strides. The missionaries could not attain their aims when they remained on the far left of the spectrum (that of little to no contextualization). However, as Ziegenbalg's book *Genealogy of the South Indian Gods* demonstrates, there was the danger of moving towards syncretism and simply adding Christ to the plethora of gods (too much

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[42] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 25.

[43] Stephen Charles Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (New York: Penguin, 1980), 196.

[44] Some of these points are summarized while those in quotations are taken directly from Neill, *A History of Christian Missions*, 195–96.

[45] Neill notes that Ziengenbalg began to learn Tamil and translated the entire New Testament within nine years of arrival in India (1714). He proceeded to translate the Old Testament yet died after completing the book of Ruth. Although finalized after his death, the work lacked the skill Ziengenbalg had produced. The masterpiece of workmanship was finished in 1796 by Johann Philipp Fabricius, the great translator of hymns.

contextualization). Nevertheless, the men did succeed in establishing the mission, translating the New Testament, and seeing some of the earliest converts among the Tamil people.[46]

The Peace Child

After years of preparation and trials, several missionary families arrived in Netherlands New Guinea, in the early 1960s.[47] They hoped to reach the tens of thousands of unreached people living remotely in the jungles and swamps. Not only would the living conditions be unbearable, but the spiritual darkness would hang like a thick cloud over the land. Nevertheless, the goal was to meet with one of the most savage tribes in the dense jungles, the Sawi people. To this people group, their highest ideal was that of treachery. As cannibals, they relished getting their enemies to trust them and then kill them. When Don and Carol Richardson arrived in 1962 and attained language proficiency, they began to tell the tribe the stories from the Bible. At first, some people were interested in the stories they heard, while others listened only in hopes of obtaining the machetes, steel axes, or medicine that the foreigners had brought. The stories continued as Don learned their language more thoroughly, yet little changed among the listeners. However, when they heard of the betrayal of Christ, the Sawi people delighted in the character of Judas who handed over Jesus with a kiss.

Richardson relates the encounter, "At the climax of the story, Maum whistled a birdcall of admiration. Kani and several others touched their fingertips to their chests in

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[46] Ziegenbald and Plütschau continued to achieve high standards throughout their ministry in India. They ordained Indian pastors who served their people well. At Ziegenbald's death, there existed a congregation of around 350 followers. Future missionaries from Denmark and England continued the translation work which had begun among the Tamil people.

[47] This account is taken from the autobiography of Don and Carol Richardson: Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Glendale, CA: Regal, 1974), 8–212.

awe. Still others chuckled. At first I sat there confused. Then the realization broke through. *They were acclaiming Judas the hero of the story.*"[48]

However, while the Sawi were honoring Judas, war broke out with a nearby tribe. Amid months of war, the Richardsons told the chief they would leave unless the Sawis put down their weapons and made peace. The chief intimated that the only way was if a child was given to the neighboring enemy during a time of war, then the tribes could establish a period of peace. The Richardsons wondered if this was not just another example of treachery. However, the village chief took his only son from his wife's hands and gave him to the enemy to establish the desperately needed peace between the tribes. Bruce J. Nicholls observes, "The failure of missionary communicators to recognize the degree of cultural conditioning of their own theology has been devastating to many Third World churches, creating a kind of Western theological imperialism and stifling the efforts of national Christians to theologize within their own culture."[49] The Richardsons could have missed this opportunity to contextualize the Good News for the Sawi people.

Fortunately, the Lord revealed to Don and Carol that Jesus was that Peace Child, offered, not for a temporary period, but forever. He alone could bring freedom from treachery and redemption to this lost tribe. The chief who had given his only son was the first to believe, and told his fellow tribesman of the peace he now had. Over time, this redemptive analogy from their culture, put in the proper context, paved the way for salvation and a church that ultimately did begin among the Sawi people. The Peace Child serves as a contemporary account of contextualization amongst a cannibalistic tribe intent on harming those around them. More than fifty years later, the Sawi tribe still worship their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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[48] Richardson, *Peace Child*, 177.

[49] Bruce J. Nicholls, *Contextualization: A Theology of Gospel and Culture* (Vancouver: Regent College Press, 2003), 25.

Modern Models of Contextualization

In this section, I evaluate two models. The first example comes from missiologist Charles Kraft. Several, but not all of his paradigms, take contextualization too far. This danger readily applies to translations which could lead to syncretism. The second model comes from Hesselgrave, the Seven-part Dimension of Cross-Cultural Communication.[50] Here I merge his ideas with the experiences I see among the Berber people.

Charles Kraft

First, in Kraft's book *Communication Theory for Christian Witness* he writes about a philosophical process known as "Critical Realism" based on the work of Ian Barbour.[51] Kraft, presents a word spectrum as follows:

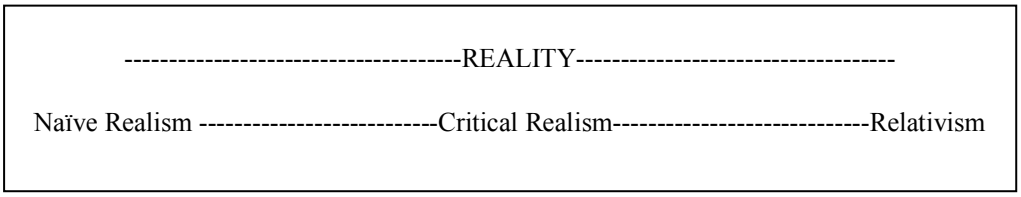

Figure 8. Kraft: Ranges of reality

Kraft records that mankind must always distinguish between "reality as it is" and any human perception of reality. This critical realism is the awareness that our perception of reality is always more or less subjective and distorted.[52] In his critique of conservative

[50] This model is found in David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross–Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 163–68.

[51] For early work on Critical Realism see Ian Barbour, *Myths, Models, and Paradigms: A Comparative Study in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).

[52] Kraft's position is more fully explained in Kraft, *Communication Theory for Witness*, 233–34.

Christians, Kraft considers those who hold too firmly to a biblical reality are living in a "naive realism," a term he borrows from Barbour. Kraft's perspective arises from Evangelicals who claim to "see reality as it is, to understand revelation clearly, and to categorize those who disagree with them as wrong."[53] Hesselgrave retorts, "But these men do not claim that *human* perception is undistorted or that *human* formulations are infallible. What they claim is that *divine* disclosures and formulations are undistorted, authoritative, and true."[54] Hesselgrave correctly argues that the Scriptures can be trusted as authoritative and inerrant, not to be considered *only* as a human insight into reality.

The apostle Paul writes, "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known" (1 Cor 13:12). Hesselgrave quotes this verse and adds, "even though we 'see through a glass darkly,' what we are looking at is divine."[55] If Kraft takes this limited view in a mirror too far, even the plain truth of Scripture becomes blurred. Thus, I see Hesselgrave's concern as Kraft's stance can *lead* to relativism, though Kraft himself may not be there.

Hesselgrave's argument is critical that translators do their best to avoid this distorted view of Scripture, translated so rigidly to obfuscate the meaning on one side or language too distinct to Islam on the other. I believe there are clear examples in Scripture of how God has revealed himself (i.e., holy, one God yet still triune, Jesus as both the Son of God and the God-man), and translators must do their best to communicate these ideas, however challenging. Nevertheless, in areas where Scripture is not clear, one must not read into the text what may not be there.

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[53] Kraft, *Communication Theory for Witness*, 233.

[54] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 195.

[55] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 195.

Second, in chapter 2 of Kraft's book *Communication Theory* the author lists ten "Myths Concerning Communication." The tenth myth notes that for humanity to believe, "What people need is more information." However, Kraft gives a surprising response. He writes that people "know enough facts so that if they wanted to, they could turn their face toward God in faith and be saved. *Motivation is the crucial problem, not lack of knowledge* . . . . Contextualization is foremost a matter of providing an effective stimulus, not of providing adequate information. People already know enough facts to be saved, but they are not ordinarily inclined to act upon those facts."[56] Kraft refers to no specific area of the world, but his statement appears incredulous for many places. As a renowned missiologist, surely he knows of the lost in North Korea, Central Asia, or North Africa who have never heard of Christ or his redemptive work. Hesselgrave sharply retorts that if Kraft were correct, Cornelius in Acts would not have needed more knowledge in order to be saved.[57] However, Acts 10–11 reveals otherwise.

When sharing the gospel among the Berbers, one realizes a profound lack of knowledge in their understanding, contrary to Kraft's point. The most common argument I hear is, "We all believe the same thing." This misunderstanding often comes from confusion about the key biblical terms we use. Words such as sin, repentance, mercy, and holiness carry deeply held Islamic meanings, carrying little Christian understanding. Kraft may point to cities or areas where his statement is true. However, many places and people around the world desperately need to hear the gospel in a way in which they understand the profound mysteries.[58] I consider this statement by Kraft, which does not

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[56] Kraft, *Communication Theory for Witness*, 53.

[57] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 195.

[58] Paul writes, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (Rom 10:14–15).

put the gospel in the proper context but instead leads toward syncretism, to be very dangerous for Christian missions.

Kraft has presented several models of contextualization to which Hesselgrave has responded. In Hesselgrave's opinion, Kraft goes too far with all these examples. I cannot entirely agree with Hesselgrave on all three of these cases, although I see the potential for syncretism. Certainly, point two above leads me to question the place where Kraft suggests people do not need information about Christ, only motivation. Perhaps Hesselgrave's interpretation of Kraft is seen through other interactions. Concerning the salvation of Muslims, Kraft states,

> He doesn't have to be convinced of the death of Christ. He simply has to pledge allegiance and faith to God who worked out the details to make it possible for his faith response to take the place of a righteousness requirement . . . He doesn't have to know the details, for knowledge does not save. He simply has to pledge in faith as much of himself as he can to as much of God as he understands, even the Muslim 'Allah.[59]

With statements like this one, I am inclined to agree more with Hesselgrave that Kraft has moved his contextualization model too far into syncretism, or Kraft's term *Relativism*.

David Hesselgrave: Seven-Part Dimension of Cross-Cultural Communication

Hesselgrave's book *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* offers a seven-part model beginning with how individuals and groups see the world. The author demonstrates how individuals convey information and how people make decisions. I blend his chart with what I have observed among the Berber people over the past two decades. This model helps demonstrate how Islam dominates every aspect of their lives. Understanding this point allows the translation team to better know this PG and how a mediating Bible translation project can best reach them. Hesselgrave's chart demonstrates

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[59] Charles Kraft, "Distinctive Religious Barriers to Outside Penetration," report on consultation on Islamic communication, Marseille, France, 1974, 71–73.

the Islamic filter that all information passes through for the Berbers. I present Hesselgrave's chart below as figure 9.

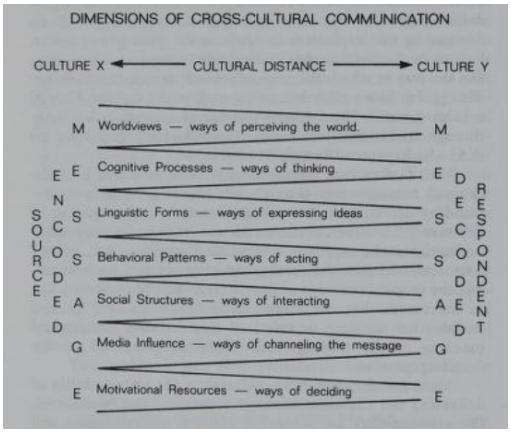

Figure 9. Dimensions of cross-cultural communication

Hesselgrave gives a vital explanation of this grid.

> When the source in "culture X" encodes a message, that message passes through a cultural grid or screen that is largely determinative of the way in which that message will be decoded by the respondent in "culture Y." This grid or screen has seven dimensions that collectively influence the message and the way in which the respondent will decode the message. This grid is like a cake-decorating tool, or the cutting discs in a meat grinder. No message can travel around it but only through it. Inevitably it leaves its marks (configurations) on that which passes through it.[60]

As Berbers hear the Christian message, the terms and phrases that enter this type of grid are highly influenced by Islamic thought. The outcome is often quite a different meaning than the biblical authors intended.

Worldview. The initial filter in this grid is worldview, which Hesselgrave describes as ways of perceiving the world (see figure 9). Paul writes that we only see and

[60] Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 163.

know in part (1 Cor 13:12). Hence, sin has hindered mankind from accurately perceiving all that is around him. James writes, "But each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (Jas 1:14–15). Everyone sees their version of reality, and the Berbers are no different. They have seen the world through an Islamic lens for more than a millennium. This fact does not mean that every aspect of their worldview is incorrect. Many of their views are commendable: belief in one God, the honor of the elderly, the importance of greetings, and devotion to prayer and fasting. However, most importantly, they do not see their need for Christ. Instead, they base their salvation on good deeds, which leads to the hope of a great reward. The Qur'an substantially shapes their worldview and their understanding. Thus when presented with the gospel message, the information passes through their minds and this worldview filter, and what disagrees with these ideas is rejected.

In contrast, the Bible also offers a worldview. Gerrit J. Van Steenbergen notes, "The Bible provides the texts to be translated with all their specific elements and complicated histories of composition and redaction included. One of the goals is to construct a worldview model that reflects the variables in a relevant way, clearly showing their coherence within each book."[61] In addition, Steenbergen addresses the risk of eliminating the historicity of Scripture, which erases the realities that occurred. Herein lies a danger of translating the text too freely while making the events more palatable for Muslim readers.

Unfortunately, for most Berber people, the only reality they know is Islam. The Bible's worldview teaches that mankind is separate from God as a result of sin and that the only hope of restoration is through the atoning work of Christ. Therefore, a vital

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[61] Gerrit J. Van Steenbergen, "Worldview Analysis: An Exegetical Tool for Bible Translation (part 1)," *Bible Translator* 58, no. 1 (January 2007): 39.

task of the translator is to communicate as clearly as possible the differences in these opposing worldviews. In the Qur'an, Muslims earn their entrance to Paradise, while in the Bible, salvation is by grace through faith. In the Qur'an, no certainty of salvation exists, but in the Bible, mankind has assurance. Therefore, clarity is a critical component of translators' endeavors.

Cognitive processes. The second filter on Hesselgrave's grid is cognitive process. Different cultures have diverse ways of processing information, and no group may claim a monopoly on what is correct thinking. For many, understanding occurs communally, while it is an individual process for other cultures. Many Western cultures think in concrete ways (i.e., that which can be seen and touched), yet Berber cultures process information through stories. For this reason, storytelling from the Qur'an is an essential part of life among the Berbers. As Christians share the gospel, outsiders must understand this way of thinking and decision-making.

In her book and workshops, Sheryl Silzer notes there are four main types of people and multiple variations within each type.[62] The first type is Individuating. Silzer writes, "The ideal individual in this type of environment is an autonomous, independent individual whose identity is based on his or her own accomplishments, possessions, skills, and characteristics."[63] On Institutionalizing, the second type, Silzer explains, "The ideal individual in this type of environment is an individual whose identity comes from following the rules of the system and obeying authority figures rather than an identity in

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[62] For brevity's sake, I only list Silzer's four main types and give my understanding pertinent to the Berbers. See Sheryl Takagi Silzer, *Biblical Multicultural Teams: Applying Biblical Truth to Cultural Differences* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey International University Press, 2011). Silzer reworks Douglas's research; see Mary Douglas, "The Framework for Four Contrastive Cultural Specifications of Human Interaction," multilingual cultural workshops, 1982, 201. For further information see Mary Douglas, *A History of Grid and Group Cultural Theory* (London: University College, 2014).

[63] Silzer, *Biblical Multicultural Teams*, 29.

relationships with others or making one's own decisions."[64] Remarking on the third type, Hierarching, Silzer notes, "Hierarching individuals find their identity through belonging to the community rather than through following a system of rules. This identity is reinforced by regular participation in unifying activities that reinforce community identity."[65] The fourth and final type is Interrelating: "This type differs from Hierarching in that there is no stratified structure. Instead, each individual is considered equal to the others. This type can have traditional complementary roles such as male/female, right/left, sacred/secular, etc. This type seeks to maintain equality through dialogue and sharing."[66]

Of these four types, I understand that Hierarching is the quadrant that identifies the Berber mindset the most. Individuals do not typically make major decisions. For example, my neighbor Hamza wants to marry, but his parents are not ready for him to do so. They know that once he has a wife, his responsibilities towards their family will shift towards his wife and their children. Therefore, although he is of marriageable age, his parents will not allow him to do so since the larger group, their family, would not benefit from his actions.

Therefore, among the Berbers, the cognitive process filters through the community. Knowing how critical stories are among these PGs, the narratives of the Bible can play an essential role in decision-making. Important stories for translation among Berber PGs in a family situation described above might consist of Abraham's insistence on finding a proper bride for his son, Isaac. Furthermore, one also sees the importance of community input in the translation process. Our team included young and

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[64] Silzer, *Biblical Multicultural Teams*, 29.

[65] Silzer, *Biblical Multicultural Teams*, 30.

[66] Silzer, *Biblical Multicultural Teams*, 31.

old, men and women—each adding to the richness of the word choices, benefitting from the entire group.

Linguistic form. The third filter on Hesselgrave's grid is linguistic form. Religion can join together or divide, joining together those with similar beliefs or dividing those who disagree. Languages can do the same as we relate more readily with those who speak our language. However, the tower of Babel demonstrates how languages can divide mankind also. Religious language can have a double effect as it brings in ideas from religion and culture, which carry immense value.

As languages live alongside one another over long periods, they often influence one another; yet, there is rarely (or possibly never) a perfect one-for-one substitute. Even within the same language, Hesselgrave notes, "No two words in different linguistic contexts mean exactly the same thing."[67] A challenge for translators is to use sets of words that overlap their cognitive environment, even if they are imperfect. This attempt by the translator seeks to balance language, religion, and culture. Issa Diab writes, "In sum, as Bible Societies, our task in the Middle East is to translate the Christian Bible, with its Greek and Hebrew cultures, into the vernacular Middle Eastern languages that are immersed in Islamic culture. The solution is neither to 'Islamize' the Bible, nor to force Greek and Hebrew concepts on Islamic culture, but to create a 'cultural mediation.'"[68] Therefore, the language used will seek this same type of mediating approach.

There is another linguistic form the translation team is targeting, a balance within the different registers. M. A. K. Halliday, Angus McIntosh, and Peter Strevens note,

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[67] Hesselgrave and Rommen, *Contextualization*, 207.

[68] Issa Diab, "Challenges Facing Bible Translation in the Islamic Context of the Middle East," *Bible Translator* 61, no. 2 (April 2010): 79.

> The category of "register" is needed when we want to account for what people do with their language. When we observe language activity in the various contexts in which it takes place, we find differences in the type of language selected as appropriate to different types of situation. There is no need to labour the point that a sports commentary, a church service and a school lesson are linguistically quite distinct. One sentence from any of these and many more such situation types would enable us to identify it correctly.[69]

Nevertheless, making the Bible sound culturally appropriate is no easy challenge. Typically, a formal register notes usage among teachers, legal professionals, broadcasters, experts, and in one-way communication. As its name indicates, the informal register finds use among family and friends. Thus, at times, the Bible will need to fall firmly into each category. The Ten Commandments are legal speech and should not sound like friends visiting at a party. However, Jesus's intimate conversation with his disciples in John 14–17 was not simply one-way speech, nor was it formal. Many other examples require a balance between these two registers: neither a highly academic level nor one of the street. Thus, the team has sought to strike a proper mediating approach within this vertical range as well.

Behavioral patterns. The fourth filter on Hesselgrave's grid is behavioral patterns. A culture's actions often reflect its beliefs about life and the afterlife. Three models demonstrate such principles: Power/Fear, Guilt/Innocence, and Honor/Shame cultures.[70] These aspects may appear at differing levels in any given society. In Berber culture, Honor and Shame have a stronghold over people and direct their behavior. Daily, one hears individuals shaming others. Additionally, a strong obligation regarding hospitality can cause a family to go hungry rather than face the shame of not serving a meal to guests. Concern over bringing shame to the family via a rejection of Islamic

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[69] M. A. K. Halliday, Angus McIntosh, and Peter Strevens, *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (London: Longmans, 1964), 86.

[70] For more information on ministering in honor-shame, power-fear, innocence-guilt cultures, see Jayson Georges, *The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame, and Fear Cultures* (Downers Grove, IL: Time, 2014); Christopher Flanders and Mischke Werner, eds., *Honor, Shame, and the Gospel* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2020); Roland Müller, *Honor and Shame: Unlocking the Door* (Philadelphia: Xlibris, 2000).

values also plays an essential role in Berbers' lives, as the community takes precedence over individual lives and desires. Similarly, the honor of the family name often leads to a rejection of the gospel, even after an initial interest.

For translators, knowing that Honor/Shame behavior exists in Berber culture can aid in decision-making. As stated, direct translation may not convey the desired meaning or highly Islamic wording. However, a challenge is that one must not create a new Christian language, which then builds a linguistic barrier between Muslims. Such is the case in Turkey. Bill Richardson writes how Turkish Christians have begun to use a type of dialect, purposefully using or rejecting problem words. Richardson notes,

> It is my observation that Protestant Turkish Christians have developed a dialect of Turkish as well. They tend to avoid the use of Arabic loan words that Muslims use. This extends beyond names of God to many theological words such as "righteousness," "law," "justification," "patience," and "worship." Turkish Christians have even coined usages that are not in the dictionary, such as creating a verb from the noun bereket (a word that Muslims typically use to refer to financial benefit) in order to bless someone.[71]

This challenge certainly affects day-to-day life and behavior as one chooses to use or remove many religious phrases (either highly Christian or highly Islamic). An example among Berbers is the expression, *Allah irham ibach* (God have mercy on your father—who is presumed dead). Berber Christians are beginning to ask themselves if they should use this phrase, a common expression for saying please in their culture. However, deep theological problems arise when one believes that, after death, God will pardon a sinner who has never received Christ. Nevertheless, creating new phrases may not be the answer, as seen with Turkish brothers and sisters. Behavior patterns, such as language choice, are profound questions with which Berber believers are now wrestling.

Communication media. The fifth category on Hesselgrave's grid is communication media. This filter includes speech, writing, songs, dramas, and stories

[71] Bill T. Richardson, "Are We Speaking the Same Language? The Influence of Scripture Translations on How Christians and Muslims Talk about God," *Bible Translator* 70, no. 1 (2019): 29.

worldwide. No one of these methods is the exclusive way to communicate. For many Westerners, written texts and lectures have become the authoritative communication medium. H. A. Brown writes,

> We ourselves are so accustomed to thinking of literature in terms of books, that where a people are illiterate we assume that literature is totally lacking. We should not however be too hasty in such an assumption, for it may well be that the people have an oral literature. This will comprise their mythology, legends, proverbs, and also poetry which may not be spoken but sung or chanted and is therefore intimately connected with their traditional music.[72]

As mentioned, storytelling with heavy input from the Qur'an and extra-qur'anic tales and myths dominate life among the Berbers.

Two stories are incredibly popular among Berbers, highly affecting their belief system. The first example is the qur'anic *aya* noting Sura 25:53. "And He is the One Who merges the two bodies of water: one fresh and palatable and the other salty and bitter, placing between them a barrier they cannot cross." The story that confirms this *aya* among the Berbers is an account of Jacques Cousteau, the French oceanographer. In their legend, Cousteau discovered this place where the salty and sweet waters meet, and he immediately converted to Islam.[73] Public denials by the Cousteau family of this discovery and his conversion have not deterred the firm belief in this folklore.

The second account is found in Sura 54:1, which reads, "The Hour has drawn near and the moon was split in two." Local Muslims note that Islamic scientists have verified this statement to be true. They further suggest that lunar cameras have proven this *aya* to be factual, and subsequently, the moon was welded back together. However

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[72] H. A. Brown, "Oral Literature and Bible Translation," *Bible Translator* 19, no. 1 (January 1968): 17–18.

[73] I include several internet browser sites that testify of this belief and one that respectfully denies it. The purpose is not to prove or disprove the event, but to demonstrate that the argument remains current. "How Jacques Cousteau Accepted Islam," *Arab News*, accessed December 7, 2022, https://www.arabnews.com/news/464412; "Jacques Cousteau (Conversion to Islam)," WikiIslam, accessed December 7, 2022, https:// wikiislam.github.io/wiki/Jacques_Cousteau_(Conversion_to_Islam).html; "Jacques Cousteau & Islam (Arabic)," Dailymotion, video, last modified January 29, 2014, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1ajzvq.

absurd non-Muslims might consider this tale, Berber Muslims hold fast to its veracity. These two stories communicate how verses from the Qur'an mix with local legends, producing strong evidence for the truths of Islam. The communication media is passed orally from generation to generation.

Bible translators have an opportunity to present new stories from the Word which can encourage spiritual growth in ways the Berbers have not seen. A significant challenge is that when Muslims hear biblical stories, they often reject them as false because they contradict the Qur'an. The translation team cannot alter truths from Scripture. However, using key biblical terms which avoid Islamic language may allow the Holy Spirit more time to work in their hearts before their immediate rejection of these narratives. The goal is not to create a new Christian language but to use existing words when possible to convey biblical truth.

Social structure. The sixth filter on Hesselgrave's grid is social structure. In the West, men and women have more freedom in their interactions than in other parts of the world. For example, co-ed participation in church activities is quite normal in the United States. However, among the Berbers of Morocco, men and women lead separate lives. At the mosque, women do not pray with the men but instead in a segregated room. Even in the few churches that exist, men and women often separate, despite the urging of foreigners for them to worship together. This lack of interaction between men and women dramatically affects one another in language acquisition. Both groups lose out on essential vocabulary, missing input from others as separation occurs in many areas beyond the mosque or church. Hesselgrave writes,

> Men and women not only have ways of acting according to accepted codes of conduct, they also have ways of interacting on the basis of where they fit in the social structure. The conventions of social structure dictate which channels of

> communication are open and which are closed; who talks to whom, in what way, and with what effect; and when one communicates which type of message.[74]

Therefore, it becomes critical in translating and testing that the team allow women to give substantial input into the Scriptures. Simply assuming that women will understand the same key biblical terms without testing will lead to profound misunderstandings later. I must clarify that many women over forty did not have the same educational opportunities men had. Therefore, the attempt to verify women's comprehension of the text is not a criticism of their mental capabilities but a realization of their educational level, separation from higher usage of vocabulary, and lack of value in society. Their input is critical for the project's success in how the text can further reach women with the biblical message. When women affirm the text, especially the key biblical terms, translators can be reasonably certain there will be a good overall understanding.

Additionally, in Berber society, leadership is given to elders, men who have led exemplary lives, completed the *hajj*, or held powerful positions. In the public sphere, one sees a heavy patriarchal control of nearly every aspect of life. However, within the home, the oldest woman wields tremendous influence over the family, especially the oldest son. A biblical text which reaches women can be a backdoor into the lives of these sons who will become leaders in their communities.

Motivational sources. The final layer in Hesselgrave's grid is motivational sources. He suggests, "Of course, people of all cultures have to make many decisions. But again, the ways in which people of various cultures think of decision making and the ways in which they arrive at decisions are very diverse."[75] The motivational sources of individual decision-making may come from forces within or without. The history of North Africa tells a disappointing tale of many Christians who left the faith to become

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[74] Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 167.

[75] Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, 168.

Muslims. Mark Cartwright believes the new religion, "spread via Islamized Berbers (who had been variously coerced or enticed to convert) in the 8th century CE along the trade routes which crisscrossed West Africa, moving from the east coast into the interior of central Africa."[76] Notably, when Islam arrived in North Africa in the seventh and eighth centuries, the Bible was available only to the educated person in Greek and Latin, while schisms were rife within the Church. Little evidence appears that translation of the Bible occurred into the surrounding peoples' heart language of Punic (an ancient form of Berber). Possibly, warriors forced numbers to convert or die by the sword. In other cases, it appears that little motivation was required to convert to Islam. Both religions spoke of faith in one God, obedience to commandments, fidelity to one's wife, and great prophets. Without a clear understanding of the biblical message, one sees how multitudes of new converts to Islam could not distinguish the new message from the old.

However, Muhammad Wolfgang Schmidt notes that, much earlier in Egypt, a different attitude prevailed where a fervent desire existed to reach the surrounding languages with the gospel. Believers translated the New Testament into the local dialects of Memphitic, Thebaic, and Bashmuric.[77] When Islam arrived, although intense pressure to convert fell upon individuals and families, some of these same people in Egypt did resist and they became the early seed of a church that still exists.

Today, a clear translation of Scripture can change the motivational process as believers unmistakably understand the biblical message. They will be able to handle better the pressure to conform which they will inevitably face at times. On the contrary, a Bible that offers little to no meaning or reinforces Islamic beliefs gives believers few tools to stand firm in the faith. If early believers had translated the Bible into Punic, the

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[76] Mark Cartwright, "The Spread of Islam in Ancient Africa," *World History Encyclopedia*, May 2019, https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1382/the-spread-of-islam-in-ancient-africa/.

[77] For further reading see Muhammad Wolfgang G. A. Schmidt, *And on This Rock I Will Build My Church: A New Edition of Philip Schaff's History of the Christian Church: From the Beginnings to the Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag, 2017), 386.

Berbers might have remained firm, and a continuous church from that time might still exist today.

Contextualization Conclusion

In this section, I have examined biblical and historical cases of contextualization. In these examples, one can see enhancement in the meaning when the biblical writers or missionaries sought to bring the gospel to people in a less foreign and more local context. In many original instances, little meaning was communicated, such as with the Richardsons in New Guinea. Further examples illustrate an utterly incorrect understanding, as with Paul in Lystra. In an attempt to avoid this foreignization, Kraft gives other models that go too far toward syncretism. However, I argue that the best biblical and historical models follow a mediating approach to contextualization. I emphasize the same methodology in Bible translation among the Berber people today. In a 2017 lecture, Phil King describes the process as follows: "The more a translation stays like the original, the more it remains foreignizing. As it moves towards the target culture, it becomes domesticating."[78] I agree with King. However, I caution that this type of speech can also go too far and, as Beekman and Callow suggest, become unduly free. Ultimately, a mediating approach for the initial Bible among the Berbers should serve them better than either extreme. As Berbers grow in their faith, translators must produce additional types of translations to serve the diverse needs of the Christian community.

Relevance Theory

As communication has occurred throughout much of history, the idea of systems embedded in human speech was understood to be the way humans related information to one another. Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson note, "From Aristotle

[78] Phil King, "Culture and Bible Translation," Deaf Ministry Development Conference, 2017, accessed August 12, 2022, https://www.academia.edu /37788398/Culture_and_Bible_Translation.

through to modern semiotics, all theories of communication were based on a single model, which we will call the code model. According to the code model [theory], communication is achieved by encoding and decoding messages."[79] However, modern linguists began challenging this theory in the middle to late twentieth century. First, I explore in this section how some linguists in the field of translation moved from the code model to an inferential one. Second, I analyze Sperber and Wilson's research (1986), known as Relevance Theory (RT), through the eyes of one of Wilson's students, Ernst-August Gutt (1991), a Bible translator in Africa at the time. Finally, I evaluate Gutt's findings for the Berber translation project in North Africa.

From Code Model to Relevance

Early translators wrestled to obtain effective communication in their texts as much as their contemporary counterparts, yet they leaned heavily on what Sperber and Wilson call a code model. They suggest, "Communication is achieved by encoding a message . . . into a signal . . . and by decoding this signal at the receiving end. Noise along the channel . . . can destroy or distort the signal. Otherwise, as long as the devices are in order and the codes are identical at both ends, successful communication is guaranteed."[80] In other words, thoughts are encoded into sounds (or written words) which are transmitted to a receiver (i.e., hearer or reader) who accepts and decodes the signal, resulting in communication. However, this model may result in an incomplete understanding because the receiver lacks previous necessary information in that specific utterance. Gutt avers this possibility as a perceived weakness of the code model.[81] The

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[79] Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 2.

[80] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 4.

[81] Ernst-August Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation" (Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1992), 6–7.

chart below shows how the *Information Source* appears to be the starting point.[82] However, at times, nearly every form of communication refers beyond the *Information Source* to previous knowledge, known as an inference. A biblical example of inference is the Jewish leaders asking Jesus why his disciples eat with unclean hands. One notes that Matthew sees no need to explain to his Jewish audience the law's definition of unclean hands (Matt 15:1–2). In this text, Matthew employs the inference model by omitting explanations due to his readers' perceived knowledge. Therefore, the information source is not the starting point, but is actually in a chain of communication beginning much earlier in the Torah.

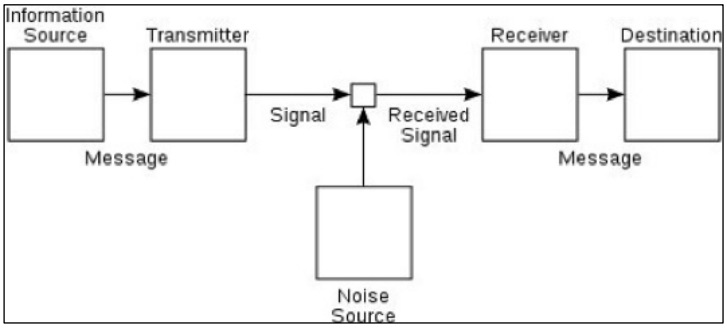

Figure 10. Code model by Shannon and Weaver (1964)

Following this pattern, one supposes that embedded in language is a code that moves from one language to another.[83] This code model, which RT challenges, is still considered a viable means of communication.

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[82] This chart originally appeared in 1949, yet is cited here in Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *A Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 7.

[83] The agreement on one code model is not unanimous. Roman Jakobson, the Russian-American linguist, notes that code units between languages do not have complete equivalence but use synonyms or circumlocution. For further reading see Roman Jakobson, *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 233.

RT counters this model by stating that effective communication is attained by stringing thoughts and ideas together, creating a chain of understanding within which the receiver has points of inference. For example, when comedians entertain their audience, they often present a humorous event early in their skit. It might be a hilarious occurrence at the park. Then, throughout the rest of the program, they refer back to this moment without expressly stating the entire story again. Instead, he mentions the time when he was at the park. The audience refers back to this and understands his joke. Without this inference, the audience misses the humor.

RT understands that a person makes an ostensive utterance they wish to communicate by relating information in a way that is most relevant to the immediate hearer.[84] They may transmit the message in a manner that causes the least amount of mental processing necessary by the hearer. The most effective manner may not use direct speech but employs inference instead. For example, my wife asks me at 8 PM if I want a strong cup of coffee. I respond, "Well, I was hoping to sleep tonight." She infers from my answer that I do not want a cup of coffee. Her understanding would be that coffee has caffeine, which keeps me awake at night. Therefore, drinking a cup this late would not allow me to sleep, meaning, "No, thank you, I do not want a cup now." However, including all this extra information requires excessive processing for the hearer. Therefore, I merely state, "I was hoping to sleep tonight." The theory of understanding this type of communication has developed over the past fifty years. I present a brief history of how the relevance theory progressed.

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[84] An ostensive utterance is any form of communication with purposeful intent to relay a message, such as pointing, gesturing, clearing one's throat, or speaking. Furthermore, Sperber and Wilson note, "Ostensive behaviour provides evidence of one's thoughts. It succeeds in doing so because it implies a guarantee of relevance. It implies such a guarantee because humans automatically turn their attention to what seems most relevant to them." Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 50.

As mentioned, many linguists in the 1960s understood that communication took place through a code imbedded in each language.[85] Eugene Nida writes, "Basic to any discussion of principles and procedures in translation is a thorough acquaintance with the manner in which meaning is expressed through language as a communication code."[86] Through Nida's work, the world of translation moved towards a dynamic equivalence model, later known as functional equivalence. In this process, the translator looks for underlying structures in language, called kernels, which help construct the surface language. Nida continues, "This means that if one can reduce grammatical structures to the kernel level, they can be transferred more readily and with a minimum of distortion."[87] His development allowed the translator to move towards a thought-for-thought process.

A contemporary of Nida's, Paul Grice, a British philosopher of language, explored the idea that communication did not occur in codes or kernels but in implicatures. In Grice's model, the meaning of the communicator may not be stated directly but rather implied in an utterance.[88] Grice's concept developed over time and set

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[85] During these years, the study of semiotics (signs and symbols used for interpretation) was well underway. Sperber and Wilson refer to this field also as semiological, and as a "generalisation of the code model of verbal communication to all forms of communication" (*Relevance*, 6). The famous Swiss linguist Ferdinand De Saussure referred to this field as semiology as far back as the late twentieth century. His most influential work was seminal and he is known as one of the crucial founders in his field; see Ferdinand De Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale* (Paris: Payot, 1916). Another key researcher early in the field was Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Nearly thirty years after its original publication in 1934, his book *Thought and Language* was translated into English from Russian. See Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1962). Vygotsky worked with young children whose speech had not yet emerged and studied how language arose from inner speech and thought. He believed that the code model was the only explanation of how humans communicate. His untimely death in 1934 was a blow to the field of semiotics. Nevertheless, his works in Russian had tremendous influence in his homeland.

[86] Eugene Albert Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964), 30.

[87] Eugene A. Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 39.

[88] Grice contributed greatly to philosophy and linguistics is his research on implicature, beginning in his article, "The Causal Theory of Perception" (1961), along with "Logic and Conversation," delivered at Harvard (1967), and later published in Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, eds., *Syntax and Semantics, vol. 3, Speech Acts* (New York: Academic, 1975). For further reading, see Richard E. Grandy and Richard Warner, "Paul Grice," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and

the stage for Sperber and Wilson to further this idea, eventually known as relevance theory.

In 1986, Sperber and Wilson published *Relevance*. Their research begins with the idea of *ostensive* communication in which a communicator desires to transmit information purposefully that he believes is worth the processing cost of the receiver. Furthermore, the communicator makes this information available in the most relevant manner possible to the addressee, often through inference. Sperber and Wilson posit, "Every act of overt communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance."[89] Gutt continues, "In other words, whenever a person engages in ostensive communication, she creates the tacit presumption that what she has to communicate will be optimally relevant to the audience: that it will yield adequate contextual effects, without requiring unnecessary processing effort."[90] However, being optimally relevant does not necessarily mean that humans always use direct speech.

In RT, the communicator expresses a message to the receiver within a shared context (*cognitive environment*) allowing the hearer to comprehend the message. He transmits this information without stating every detail, which would make communication extremely burdensome, and therefore less relevant. Harriet Hill writes, "Communicators guess the background information their audience possesses, and design their utterance (or non-verbal stimulus) to say just enough to stimulate in the audience certain assumptions they have, so that between what is said and what they know, the audience can infer the intended meaning."[91] For example, when it is time to eat, my wife

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Uri Nodelman, Fall 2022, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/grice/.

[89] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 158.

[90] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 16.

[91] Harriet Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads: From Translation to Communication* (New York: St. Jerome, 2006), 14.

says, “Dinner is ready.” Although not directly stated, the implication is, “Get up soon and come to the table to eat.”

Nevertheless, similar statements in a separate context may yield a different implicature entirely. Hill gives a humorous example of how the cognitive environment affects the relevance of the same utterance. She writes, “If I am sitting in my house and see you walking up, and I call out, ‘The door is open’, the meaning is quite different than if I am outside the lion’s cage at the zoo and the zookeeper says the same thing. In the first case, it means ‘Come in!,’ but in the second it means ‘Run for your life!’”[92] The utterance, “The door is open,” is the same, yet the context has changed.

Shortly after the publication of *Relevance*, Gutt, a student of Wilson’s and a Bible translator in East Africa, immediately recognized the implications of RT for his vocation. In a series of lectures in 1991 at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, Gutt introduced the importance of RT for Bible translators. Gutt suggests, “The most common and most basic assumption about human communication has been that it works by *encoding and decoding.*”[93] He continues, “Nevertheless, there are serious problems with the view that communication consists in the encoding and decoding of messages. The main reason for these reservations is that there are many aspects of human communication for which the code model simply cannot explain.”[94] He notes several examples where context is needed “to disambiguate the utterance.”[95] This explanation becomes necessary for the receiver to understand the sender’s *intended* meaning. Today, if I misunderstand my wife, I can ask her for further clarification and hopefully grasp the context of the situation. However, the

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[92] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 15.

[93] Gutt, “Lectures on Relevance Theory,” 6.

[94] Gutt, “Lectures on Relevance Theory,” 6.

[95] Gutt, “Lectures on Relevance Theory,” 7.

challenge arising for the Bible translator is that the authors are no longer present to consult.

Furthermore, if the audience is unaware of the missed context, they may also believe they already understand the authorial intention, thereby never asking for an explanation. Sperber and Wilson note, "Having found a line of interpretation which satisfies his expectation of relevance in a way the speaker might manifestly have foreseen, he need look no further. The first such line of interpretation is the only one; all alternative lines of interpretation are disallowed."[96] Therefore, if the audience overlooks authorial intention or fails to recognize their misunderstanding, miscommunication will inevitably occur in Bible translation.

In Gutt's lecture, he is not suggesting that coding or decoding *never* occurs within human communication. He states, "Let me stress at this point that there is no doubt whatsoever that encoding and decoding *can* and very often *do* play a role in human communication . . . . So relevance theory does not claim that communication necessarily works without coding."[97] However, Gutt understands that the code model is not the only way transmission of information occurs because inference is prevalent in communication.

Concerning inference, Gutt observes three consequential facts:

> First, *our beliefs have inferential properties*, allowing us to arrive at new (true) beliefs on the basis of "old" true beliefs. And this is what inference really is: Inference is a truth-preserving logical operation. Second, *we make frequent use of inferential processes in our daily lives*, without even being aware of this fact. Third, *we use inference to interpret verbal communication as well as other experiences*."[98]

Although I agree with Gutt on these facts, I add a vital clarification concerning his first point. Gutt states that inference allows us to arrive at new truths based on old truths.

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[96] Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber, "Pragmatics and Time," in *Relevance Theory: Applications and Implications*, ed. Robyn Carston and Seiji Uchida (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1998), 11.

[97] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 6.

[98] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 6.

However, these "old" truths may not be correct yet only true based on the hearer's worldview and context (i.e., perceived truth). For example, the foundational point for all Islamic thought is Muhammad and the Qur'an. All inferences for the Muslim will build upon these two "old truths." The problem continues as the interpreter builds on his old truths, which are actually falsehoods, and the process then extends to Gutt's second and third points.

In testing the book of Daniel in Tamazight, the team gathered several native speakers to check what they understood. One of the listeners was Fatima, the grandmother of one of our translators, who had experienced little outside of Islam her entire life. She had recently heard the stories of Jesus but had not accepted Christ. In chapter 6, Daniel is thrown into the lion's den. We related the story to our listeners, asking what they understood from the text. We read the following account from Daniel 6:16–22:

> So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! My God sent his messenger, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."

When Fatima related the story to us, all the details were correct until she arrived at verse 22. She stated, "May the king live forever. My God sent the Prophet Muhammad, and he shut the mouth of the lions." The team was astonished. Immediately, everyone began to ask her, "Where did you hear Muhammad in this story?" She replied, "You clearly said, Muhammad." We reread the story, and when we got to verse 22, she stopped us and said, "See, there it is. God sent *his messenger*." We were astonished at what Fatima had

discovered. She was correct, for in her worldview, *his messenger* is Muhammad. The gravity of the situation set in deeply. Fortunately, we adjusted the text to remove Muhammad and allow the hearers to understand that God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions.

In Gutt's inferential model, all three points become salient here. First, for Fatima, an "old" truth (Muhammad is God's messenger) became a new truth: Muhammad saved Daniel from the lions. Second, she used inference in her daily life without even realizing it. Third, verbal communication moved beyond Muhammad being God's messenger and him becoming Daniel's savior. Thus, Gutt's example of inference in Bible translation has enormous ramifications for both the translator and the receiver.

Another critical aspect of RT is how humans often create meaning when uncertainty exists. For example, I was speaking to some friends about their travels in South Asia when the wife mentioned their time in Sringeri. However, as I had never heard this word before, my mind correlated the sounds and understood the word to be Hungary. It took a brief moment to remember that Hungary is not in South Asia and that I had obviously misunderstood her. I had to interrupt and inquire where they had been during their travels and learned Sringeri is in eastern India. Dave Weber suggests, "In reality, however, it is quite difficult to create zero meaning. No matter how twisted the grammar, no matter how unfamiliar the vocabulary, no matter how ill-defined the context, humans are so predisposed to creating meaning that it is hard to say something that does not communicate something."[99] Weber's analysis may be correct, especially considering the cost needed to process information. Typically, the easiest solution to the puzzle will be chosen, in this case Hungary. Had my friends been traveling to Eastern Europe, I could have easily misunderstood them without even knowing.

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[99] David J. Weber, "A Tale of Two Translation Theories," *Journal of Translation* 1, no. 2 (2005): 41.

In Bible translation, one quickly realizes how this process of the mind can lead to catastrophic misunderstandings far beyond geographic locations in Southern Asia. In our translation project, this process resulted in the following examples: Moses's sister Miriam became Miriam, the mother of Jesus, John the Baptist was seen washing clothes in the Jordan, and fishers of men were understood to be assassins.[100] Therefore, testing the cognitive environment is crucial to passing on the text's intended meaning.

Thoughts on Relevance Theory for Bible Translation

Harriet Hill worked on a Bible translation project from 1984–1998 in Ivory Coast with the Adioukrou people. Their team's work successfully passed consultant checks, yet Hill noted that she felt uneasy about the communicative value of their text. She writes, "I sensed that much of the meaning of the text was lost, not because of the translation, but because the Adioukrou did not know the socio-cultural context in which the text took place."[101] After completing the New Testament, she began studying RT and was able to return to Africa in 2001 to apply this research in light of her findings. An important consideration which Hill discovered was the contextual mismatches between biblical and Adioukrou cultures. She notes, "Having identified the mismatches . . . [they explored] various ways to adjust the audience's context so that they [were] able to infer the intended meaning."[102] Correcting these mismatches aided their comprehension of and

[100] Over the years, the translation team discovered these misunderstandings and many more during the testing process. Foreign names and locations are particularly prone to be passed over. In response, the team often creates a more familiar spelling if possible. The translation team noticed, over time, that if too many foreign names are given, it produces an overload of mental processing and the attempt to understand is abandoned. Gutt notes that with "no assurance that they have understood the text . . . there are also very likely to *terminate the communication process.* That is, they will stop reading or listening." Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 19.

[101] Hill, introduction to *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, i.

[102] Hill, introduction, ii.

interest in Scripture among her PG.[103] However, as footnoted below, these corrections were not always simple substitutions.

While Hill supports the use of RT in Bible translation, not all other translators agree on this assessment. Wendland is a Bible translator and long-time UBS consultant in Southern Africa. Wendland advocates for Bibles that would follow more of a mediating approach and questions the relevancy and subjectivity of RT for Bible translation. He suggests, "The only one who can properly evaluate the 'relevance' of any given instance of ostensive (overt) communication is the individual addressee himself or herself based on what is going on in his or her mind at the time (or thereafter)."[104] He asks, "It is a criterion that is itself too relative, for how can it be assessed and by whom?"[105] He specifically questions how one determines *relevance* and *minimal* processing cost. Gutt addresses this question later in his research, rephrasing his statements to be "not requiring *unnecessary processing effort.*"[106] Wendland challenges this notion as well. He writes,

> People are usually prepared to work harder at texts which they know contain messages that will benefit them—not only cognitively, but emotively, motivationally, and hopefully spiritually as well. The economic adage, "you get

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[103] For the Adioukrou, the staple food is *attiéké*, a food source derived from fermented cassava. Colonizers introduced bread into their culture which the tribesmen considered delicious but not filling. Thus, they wholeheartedly agree with Jesus's statement, "Man does not live by bread alone." Translators might suggest a possible substitution of *attiéké* for bread. Unfortunately, they could misunderstand his meaning and believe that man can indeed live by *attiéké* alone. Furthermore, the Adioukrou might believe that the Jews of Jesus's day also ate this fermented cassava. Thus, Hill notes, "At times, simplifying a text risks losing parts of the meaning that are key for understanding it and can lead to a different understanding of the passage, not just a more superficial one." Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 57. Hill's revision work corrected several contextual mismatches for the Adioukrou; for example, allowing the hearer to understand that foot washing was a daily custom in Jewish hospitality, yet beneath Jewish males to perform, demonstrated Jesus's "radical servanthood that broke all the social rules and expectations" (63). Hill's *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads* is an in-depth look at her translation project among the Adioukrou of Ivory Coast.

[104] Ernst R. Wendland, "On the Relevance of 'Relevance Theory' for Bible Translation," *Bible Translator* 47, no. 1 (1996): 127–28.

[105] Wendland, "Relevance of 'Relevance Theory,'" 127.

[106] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 16.

> what you pay for," would presumably be just as applicable, if not more so, in many communication events of great personal consequence.[107]

Possibly, RT overstates the belief that the lowest processing cost always results in the most effective communication. Hill notes,

> High processing costs in themselves do not imply a low degree of relevance. If the cognitive effects are high, even if there are high processing costs, the net effect may be more relevant than communication that requires less processing but has less effects. It is the relationship between effects and effort that determines the degree of relevance. For example, I found that reading Sperber and Wilson's *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* required high processing costs. It was in my language, accessible, and in a media I knew well, but I was lacking much of the background information they assumed their audience would have. I was motivated, however, and invested much energy in reading and understanding it to the best of my ability. Despite the high processing costs, I found it to be very relevant. It has transformed my perception of communication.[108]

The Bible translator must walk a tightrope, providing the intricate biblical concepts in language that the hearer clearly understands. In other words, if Bible teaches difficult concepts, which it often does, let the translators do their best not to add additional barriers with their language choice. Ultimately, one should always keep the concepts as the authors intended.

Concerning relevance, cost of processing, and direct translation, Wendland offers a restatement of RT.[109] He writes, "The primary goal is to communicate the *closest functional equivalent* of the biblical message to a clearly specified group of receptors in a way that is *most accessible* in terms of the originally intended *contextual effects* and *most appropriate* in terms of *textual effectiveness* with respect to structure

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[107] Wendland, "Relevance of 'Relevance Theory,'" 129.

[108] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 6.

[109] Wendland offers a critique of Gutt's notion of direct translation. Wendland argues that a direct translation is "essentially a reproduction of the original stimulus" ("Relevance of 'Relevance Theory,'" 131), which is not possible even within the same language, much less considering the languages, cultures, and time differences of biblical and modern peoples. Additionally, direct translation returns to an early viewpoint that a literal translation is more accurate, although Gutt never uses this exact terminology. For further reading see pp. 129–31.

and style in the RL [receptor language]."[110] I agree with Wendland's helpful statements of *closest functional equivalent* and *most appropriate* when working among the Berbers. Indeed, the effectiveness of any Bible translation takes the translators' best efforts and yokes them with pastoral teaching and discipleship.

Nevertheless, I do not advocate slipshod work or subpar translation. There exists the reality that every language has limitations, creating instances where translators can only approximate the authorial intent rather than attain a perfect overlay. Examples in English exist of imperfect renderings which serve as the closest functional equivalent.[111] However, as scriptural knowledge grows among the Berbers, these closest functional equivalents may change and reflect a maturation in comprehension and faith among the particular PG.

Implications for Bible Translation

Gutt continues by posing and answering a vital question, "When is an act of communication successful? When the audience succeeds in inferring the informative intention of the communicator."[112] In Bible translation, one questions how we can know if the audience has inferred the correct informative intention. Gutt offers two suggestions for the communicator: (1) Make clear to the audience that she wants to communicate; and (2) have the right properties to help them draw those inferences that she intends to convey rather than other inferences.[113] As an evangelical, I firmly believe God wants to

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[110] Wendland, "Relevance of 'Relevance Theory,'" 131.

[111] Several examples in English come to mind: δικαιοσύνη translated as righteousness yet, in English, often missing the critical aspect of justice; διάκονος may be rendered as deacon or minister, yet could lack the thought of being a servant. Several words in Hebrew and Greek are simply translated as love, yet they overlook the more narrow sense in which the authors use them.

[112] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 8.

[113] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 16.

communicate with mankind through his Word. Therefore, I will not belabor this first point; instead, I wish to scrutinize Gutt's second claim further.

I argue that the first translation among indigenous Islamic peoples should use a mediating approach. In light of this thesis and the latter part of Gutt's statement above, I believe a mediating approach can help *avoid* many incorrect inferences. Hill adds, "When an audience does not have access to the intended context, they might access an unintended context and, consequently, infer the wrong meaning. Because they've found a relevant meaning, their quest for relevance is satisfied, and there is nothing to indicate to them that something is amiss."[114] Thus, in a highly Islamic context, the hearer will see no need to go beyond what they perceive to be a correct interpretation and instead will reinforce their current belief system. Therefore, I argue that initially, the best solution is to translate in a mediating approach that can help minimize the infiltration of Islamic thought.

Case Study for Relevance Theory

This study allows the examination of the RT process in the Tamazight translation project and testing procedure. I will show how we progressed through several words, failing many times until we reached the best solution in Tamazight. In the Gospels and the book of Acts, the word temple, ἱερῷ, appears approximately ninety times. *Strong's* defines the word to mean the following: a temple, either the whole building, or specifically the outer courts, open to worshippers, a sacred place, a sanctuary.[115] Barclay-Newman defines the word as such: temple; temple precincts.[116] Therefore, the word

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[114] Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads*, 19.

[115] James Strong, *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 255.

[116] Barclay M. Newman Jr., *Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2010), 87.

expresses the idea of a sacred place, a temple in general, or The Temple— the holy building of the Jews found in Palestine during the time of Christ.

In the Tamazight Bible translation project, the team began with the Berberized word for temple which stemmed from the Arabic, الْهَيْكَلِ (*al-haykal*). When the word was read in a biblical context to Berbers without previous biblical knowledge, it did not carry any meaning of a temple, a religious place, or The Temple in Jerusalem. Believers who previously knew this word from other sources such as songs, films, teachings, or Arabic and French Bibles understood the correct meaning.

For monolingual Tamazight speakers, the word-for-word translation for temple, *l-haykal*, was unsuccessful in producing fruitful communication. While it did seem that the team coded the word accurately, it did not carry the correct meaning among those tested.[117] Gutt states, "Thus, we see that encoding the right meaning does not guarantee communicative success."[118] Using RT, the word *l-haykal* gave no inference to a place of worship for the Jews, even with the surrounding contextual information such as Jesus going into the *l'haykal* or when confronted by the *l'haykal* guards. Using either a code model or RT, the word failed to communicate and did not carry enough inference for monolingual speakers of Tamazight.

However, the Arabic word الْهَيْكَلِ also carries another meaning: a skeleton. Thus, those who have studied Arabic (MSA), yet had no exposure to the word in a Jewish religious sense, were quite confused with the usage. In English, several verses from John might read, "But Jesus went to the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the skeleton, and all the people came to him; and he sat down and taught them" (John 8:1–2). In the testing and several back translations, the word was consistently

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[117] Certainly, one can argue that although accurate, the correct meaning was never encoded with this attempted word.

[118] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 12.

rendered as a skeleton by those with higher education, while for those with little to no education in MSA, the word carried no meaning.

The problem for those educated in MSA is that their understanding is completely removed from the cognitive environment (of religion) and therefore leaves the listener confused. Gutt writes, "The cognitive environment of an individual consists of all the facts that that individual is capable of representing in his mind and of accepting as true, or probably true. The sources of this information can be perception (seeing, hearing, etc.) memory, or inference."[119] Therefore, in an instant, the mind hears the word and pictures a man, Jesus, walking into a skeleton. Although conjuring this picture is possible in our mind, we grasp that this is not actual reality and reject the meaning.

Seeing this word was not the best choice, the team attempted another replacement for the temple, the Berber word for mosque: ⵍⵜⵎⵣⴳⵉⵜⴰ, (*ltamzgita*) since it is a known place of worship. The word was recognized by all who heard it, whether Christian or Muslim, educated or not. However, the meaning was consistently understood to be the Islamic gathering place where Muslims meet on Fridays for prayer. Often in testing, there were questions about why Jews were permitted to enter the Islamic place of worship and assertions that the text was wrong since no Jew can enter a mosque. The team attempted to add a clarifier to the word: the mosque of the Jews (*ltamzgita n Udain*), yet this addition did not elucidate the meaning. Although not commonly noted, some questioned why there was a mosque in Jerusalem six hundred years before the time of Muhammad. Unfortunately, even some Christian brothers and sisters incorrectly suggested that Islamic mosques have existed since the time of Abraham. Therefore, although recognized as a place of religious worship, the Islamic understanding of the mosque seemed to possess too great of a stronghold. An example in English could be using the word church as a meeting place for Jehovah's Witnesses. For the evangelical Christian, the dissonance is

[119] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 13.

too strong to use this word. Even the Jehovah's Witnesses have rejected the word, church, and adopted Kingdom Hall as their place of worship. Therefore, without introducing misunderstanding, one cannot say that their Jehovah's Witness friend attends church every Sunday.

As stated above, when the team used the word *tamzgita*, the universal understanding rendered was a mosque where Muslims pray. However, the intended meaning of the Gospel writers as a Jewish center of worship was never understood. The addition to the phrase, a mosque *of the Jews*, did not override the initial inference, which continues to carry an Islamic influence. As Sperber and Wilson note, this example demonstrates *contextual strengthening.*[120] Gutt adds, "The strength with which we hold a belief depends on two things: the way in which we arrived at the thought, and its relation to other beliefs we hold. We tend to give high credibility to information obtained from perception—for example, what we see."[121] In this case, in North Africa, Berbers see mosques several times a day. Therefore, their beliefs are bound to this tangible structure observed in their daily lives. Furthermore, many Muslims believe that only their religion is correct and that all others are false. Thus, if a religious book states that even Jesus went into a mosque in Jerusalem, it can reify Islamic doctrine. Since no inference in their cognitive environment links the word to a Jewish temple, they naturally lean towards the most straightforward processed visualization: a mosque which they encounter daily.

Therefore, the team decided to apply a mediating approach, neither word-for-word with a Berberized substitute of Arabic nor too idiomatic with an Islamic replacement. The team selected two phrases: تادرت ن رابي, (*tadart n Rabi*) the house of the Lord and تدارت ن وداين, (*tadart n Udain),* the house of the Jews. Neither phrase met with

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[120] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 112.

[121] Gutt, "Lectures on Relevance Theory," 14.

considerable resistance. However, the latter choice did not seem to carry as much of a religious context in its meaning. Some listeners even wondered if "the house of the Jews" was like a club where Jewish people met. The testers understood the house of the Lord as a place where men would go to worship.[122] We then asked if Jews could enter and worship, and the response was that any male (Muslim, Jews, or Christian) would be permitted to worship there. We combined these phrases and arrived at *tadart n Rabi n Udain* (the house of the Lord for the Jews), hoping to designate it as a place of worship specifically for the Jews. The only negative feedback was that the phrase was rather long and cumbersome, especially when repeated many times in the text. Therefore, the team felt that the best solution was to put this long phrase at the first of a chapter where it initially occurs and use the house of the Lord throughout the remainder of the chapter. In further revisions, this choice should be consistent throughout the entire New Testament.

The mediating approach the team chose has aided in avoiding misunderstandings, as noted above. However, the original term, ἱερῷ, also gives the connotation of a general place of worship, such as Acts 19:27, the Temple of Diana, albeit not perfectly. However, many times in the Gospels and Acts, the writers were not referring to *a* general place of worship. Instead, they mean to convey *the* Temple where the Jews *alone* worshipped. Therefore, the final decision of the House of the Lord of the Jews does seem to give the necessary inferences and allows the hearer to envision a building where Jews worship. According to Sperber and Wilson, this example demonstrates the principle of *optimal relevance* (or *optimally processed*). "Optimal relevance being defined as follows":

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[122] One notices the cultural impact here. In testing, the team realized that the listeners stated how typically men would go into the worship center. When asked if women could enter also, the testers understood that there were possibly additional rooms where women could pray. This answer makes complete sense in light of their cognitive environment, where men enter the central part of the mosque and women can only use side rooms.

(a.) The set of assumptions which the communicator intends to make manifest to the addressee is relevant enough to make it worth the addressee's while to process the ostensive stimulus.
(b.) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one the communicator could have used to communicate that set of assumptions.[123]

Admittedly with this solution, one risks that the hearers could misunderstand this to be two separate and distinct places.[124] Nevertheless, the team felt that with the use of House of the Lord of the Jews, one has the best chance to avoid the wrong intention. This phrase, which most Berbers understand as a place of worship for Jews and not specific to Muslims, was a success for the team and retained as the best solution to date.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed Hesselgrave's (and Rommen's) thoughts on contextualization, including several models in the Berber context. Additionally, I have applied Relevance Theory by Gutt to a case study in Tamazight to understand better how to apply this theory in the translation project. Both models demonstrate how a mediating approach offers the best hope of understanding the initial Bible translation among indigenous Islamic peoples. Islam penetrates every aspect of Berber culture. Thus, if words carry little meaning, the hearers will return to what they know. Similarly, if words sound completely Islamic, the hearer has little hope of obtaining the Christian message behind them. Thus, the context is crucial to understand key biblical terms properly. Furthermore, RT strengthens this argument as many terms carry heavy inferences leading back to Islamic ideology. The mediating approach allows the translator to avoid misunderstandings that may be common if the text lies on extreme ends of the spectrum.

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[123] Sperber and Wilson, *Relevance*, 158.

[124] While attempting to find the best word for the temple in the New Testament, this obstacle has arisen on how to phrase a pagan temple, such as one to Zeus or Diana. This challenge still needs to be resolved and will require further research and testing.

CHAPTER 4

A NEW RUBRIC FOR DETERMINING PLACEMENT OF BIBLES ON A SPECTRUM

In this chapter, I first introduce Phil Parshall, whose early work influenced John Travis's contextualization spectrum. Second, I evaluate Travis's spectrum used for ministry among Muslims who have come to faith in Christ. I discuss opposing views of what is called the "Insider Movement." Third, I assess the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (USBGNT) variant grading. Finally, I will meld these two charts, creating a helpful spectrum for Bible translators among minority PGs, especially those working with Berbers in North Africa.

Phil Parshall

Phil Parshall was a missionary among Islamic peoples for many years, serving in Bangladesh and the Philippines. He was a pioneer in the field of contextual theology among Muslims. His ministry influenced John Travis's work, including his eventual presentation of the C1–C6 spectrum. Parshall notes that back in the 1970s, not everyone welcomed his ideas. He writes, "When, in 1975, our team of missionaries commenced a C4 strategy in an Asian Muslim country, we faced considerable opposition. One long-term Christian worker in an Islamic land told me basically, 'You are on a dangerous slide. Next you will be denying the cross.'"[1] In those days, evidently some saw Parshall as a radical missionary, moving towards extreme contextualization among Muslims. However, he remained faithful to the C4 strategy and did not overstep the boundaries of

[1] Phil Parshall, "Danger! New Directions in Contextualization," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1998): 404.

the gospel message. Nevertheless, decades later, he fears that some missionaries after him have done that very thing:

> But now I am the one to protest the "slide," not by our team, but by others who are ministering in various parts of the Muslim world. This slide is incremental and can be insidiously deceptive, especially when led by people of highest motivation. Now it seems to me we need to bring these issues before our theologians, missiologists, and administrators. Let us critique them before we suddenly find that we have arrived at a point which is indisputably sub-Christian.[2]

When Parshall speaks of holding to a C4 strategy, he refers to a spectrum created by John Travis, a pseudonym for a friend of Parshall and a long-term worker among Muslims. The spectrum represents how Muslim-Background Believers (MBBs) live out their faith within their communities. I present Travis's ideas and offer an evaluation. The C1–C6 spectrum parallels many ideas among translations for Muslim peoples.

John Travis and the C1–C6 Spectrum

In 1998, a missionary among Islamic people, John Travis, published a spectrum to "compare and contrast types of 'Christ-centered communities' (groups of believers in Christ) found in the Muslim world."[3] Many missionaries among Muslims have used this tool to gauge how their people contextualize the gospel. I find it helpful, but I am concomitantly concerned about the extremes found on both ends when doing church planting among Islamic PGs.

C1–C6 Spectrum

Travis notes that his spectrum is only descriptive. He writes,

> The six types in the spectrum are differentiated by language, culture, worship forms, degree of freedom to worship with others, and religious identity. All

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[2] Parshall, "Danger!," 407.

[3] John Travis, "C1–C6 Spectrum Developed by John Travis (Pseudonym)," *The People of the Book*, accessed October 24, 2022, https://www.thepeopleofthebook.org/about/strategy/c1-c6-spectrum/.

worship Jesus as Lord and core elements of the gospel are the same from group to group. The spectrum attempts to address the enormous diversity which exists throughout the Muslim world in terms of ethnicity, history, traditions, language, culture, and, in some cases, theology.[4]

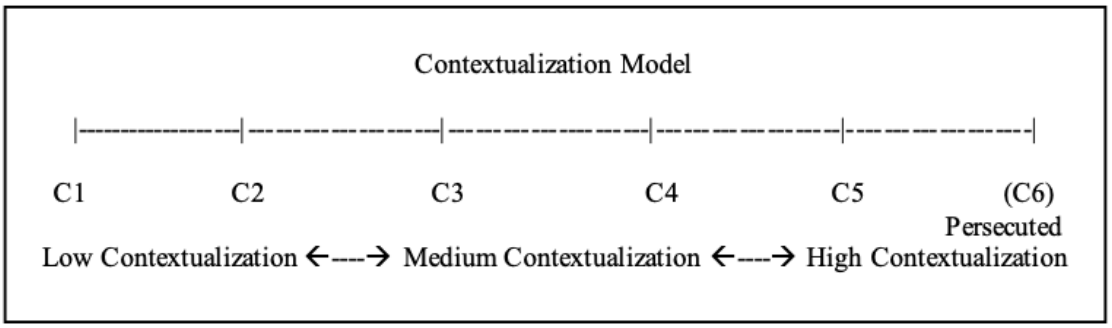

Figure 11. C1–C6 spectrum by John Travis[5]

In the C1 model, the Christ-Centered Communities (C) are groups using foreign language, culture, liturgy, and possibly even foreign architecture on their buildings. The style of worship would seem utterly foreign to Muslims. Typically, in Morocco, a French-speaking European church would be considered a C1 approach. However, I note that a C1 church is not necessarily a Western one, although many exist. Instead, their influences originate from outside of the local community. An example could also be Middle Eastern Arab culture and language imposed on the Berbers. These believers call themselves Christians. In this realm, low levels of contextualization exist.

C2 communities would be similar to C1 groups except that the language used would be local, with significant Christian vocabulary. Although in North Africa this group speaks Tamazight, locals would consider their actions to be foreign, as there exists a heavy sense of outside culture. Travis notes, "The cultural gap between Muslims and

[4] I take Travis's word spectrum and create a visual image. This information is adapted from John Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 407.

[5] Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 407–8.

C2 is still large, while the majority of churches located in the Muslim world today are C1 or C2."[6] Proponents of high contextualization may accuse missionaries of extracting local people. However, it could be possible that C1 and C2 believers want to escape Islamic culture as much as Islam.

In the C3 model above, one moves towards the center of the chart where medium levels of contextualization exist. Local language, dress, foods, traditions, and culture are observed as long as the Bible allows. This group would look more like the surrounding Berber culture; however, they would still call themselves Christians. They may meet in a church building but also in a neutral site.

In a C4 model, the group begins to look very Islamic from an outsider's perspective, although local Berbers do not see these men and women as fellow Muslims. Travis adds that "biblically permissible Islamic forms and practices are also utilized (e.g., praying with raised hands, keeping the fast, avoiding pork, alcohol, and dogs as pets, using Islamic terms, dress, etc.)."[7] These groups would not use the term *Messihi* (Christian) to avoid the historical baggage it brings; instead, they would call themselves "Followers of *Isa al Messih*" (Followers of Jesus the Messiah). For many MBBs, missionaries, and missiologists, this group penetrates to the farthest limits of acceptable contextualization.

In the C5 model, these new believers do not leave the mosque or the Muslim community upon salvation. Advocates of this movement, such as Rebecca Lewis, recommend that these MBBs continue to attend the mosque and remain "inside their socio-religious communities, retaining their identity as members of that community."[8] This type of practice is where the term comes from "Insider movement." These Berber

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[6] Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 407–8.

[7] Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 407–8.

[8] Rebecca Lewis, "Promoting Movements to Christ within Natural Communities," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 76.

brothers and sisters would not call themselves Christians; instead, they would refer to themselves as Muslims or Messianic Muslims. These men and women appear to be Islamic in nearly every way, including language, culture, tradition, vocabulary, and mosque attendance. When they come to faith in Christ, they do not cease praying at the mosque or reciting the *shahada.*[9]

The C6 model includes MBBs who come to faith in perilous circumstances. They face long-term imprisonment, torture, or death if anyone discovers their new-found faith. The community or their family would see them as traitors to Islam, Muhammad, and their culture. Furthermore, governmental regimes may press heavily upon them, forcing them, by all means, to return to Islam. Many of these believers have little or no fellowship with other followers of Jesus or must take extreme measures to meet secretly. Their situation is far from desirable, and believers worldwide can pray for a change in these totalitarian regimes or fundamentalist families that deny these individuals from worshipping as they desire. Due to the threat of intense persecution, these MBBs continue to identify as Muslims in their local community.

Discussion Concerning the C1–C6 Spectrum

I have seen each of the C1–C6 scenarios among MBBs while working for decades with Berbers in North Africa. Some wish to abstract themselves from their religion and culture and identify as western Christians (C1–C2). Others have chosen to follow Christ yet remain in their culture (C3–C4). I have also seen C6 believers who,

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[9] The *shahada* is the Islamic creed, recited at five prayer times each day. لا إله إلا الله, محمد رسول الله. The meaning is, "There is no God but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God." A Messianic Muslim may remove the last part with Muhammad. The new believer is under no obligation to continue saying the *shahada*, but nearby Muslims will undoubtedly notice that this omission has occurred because faithful Muslims recite it daily. J. Dudley Woodberry, a proponent of Insider Movements notes, "Most of those I asked, however, said that they kept quiet when the part about Muhammad was recited or they quietly substituted something that was both biblically and qur'anically correct, like 'Jesus is the Word of God.'" J. Dudley Woodberry, "The Incarnational Model of Jesus, Paul, and the Jerusalem Council," in *Understanding Insider Movements: Disciples of Jesus within Diverse Religious Communities*, ed. Harley Talman and John Jay Travis (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2015), 466, Kindle.

fearing persecution, have felt the need to remain completely silent about their faith. Insisting that no nationals be told, they have only shared their new belief with a handful of foreigners.

However, many colleagues and I have questioned the validity of the C5 groups. These men and women claim to be followers of Christ, yet in almost every way, they appear to be Muslim. There exists no threat of extreme persecution, yet they continue to go to the mosque and identify as Muslims. The new life to which Christ calls his children is not visible in these individuals. When they are in a "safe crowd," they testify to be believers in Jesus, yet outside these groups, they claim Islam. Their beliefs become blended, not just in the early moments of salvation, but continue for years in duplicity. Somewhere between C4 and C5 exists a line of demarcation that steps beyond contextualization into syncretism. Writing in a Buddhist context, Philip Pinckard adds, "Once a certain point is passed, the danger of syncretism goes from low to high."[10] Pinckard and I have identified the same point or line. Notably, this questioning comes not only from western missionaries but also from local MBBs.

C5 Groups

The C5 communities take steps in contextualization beyond retaining local culture and tradition. Travis justifies their actions. He writes,

> Christ-centered Communities of "Messianic Muslims" who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, C5 believers remain legally and socially within the community of Islam. Somewhat similar to the Messianic Jewish movement. Aspects of Islamic theology which are incompatible with the Bible are rejected, or reinterpreted if possible. Participation in corporate Islamic worship varies from person to person and group to group . . . C5 believers are viewed as Muslims by the Muslim community and refer to themselves as Muslims who follow Isa the Messiah.[11]

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[10] Philip A. Pinckard, "The Truth is Contextualization Can Lead to Syncretism: Applying Muslim Background Believers Contextualization Concerns to Ancestor Worship and Buddhist Background Believers in a Chinese Culture," *Journal for Baptist Theology and Ministry* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 138.

[11] Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 408.

I am troubled most that Muslims still view these "believers" as Muslims. This status is understandable in the initial few weeks or months after believing. Unfortunately, those who promote the C5 movement see this lifestyle as normal. However, Paul writes to the church in Corinth, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here" (2 Cor 5:17). A believer who can remain in his old life and be known as a faithful Muslim should be highly suspect. Furthermore, Travis's parallel with Messianic Jews presents a poor analogy as Jewish theology comes from the Hebrew Scriptures, which Christians hold to be true. Islamic doctrine comes from the Qur'an, which contains many beliefs opposed to the Bible.

The C5 believer parallels a highly contextualized Bible translation full of Islamic vocabulary. He looks and sounds like his Muslim counterpart, and no one may see any difference. Similarly, this type of Bible translation employs qur'anic terms and can communicate the same Islamic message. Thus, translators should avoid this type of translation. Occasionally, a word may arise which passes as neutral, yet translators need to be very cautious in their choice of key biblical terms. Otherwise, just as a C5 believer may appear as still being a Muslim, our Bible may confirm Islamic beliefs, which certainly is not the intention of the Author.

C5 Evangelism Strategy

In the same issue of *Evangelical Mission Quarterly* (October 1998) that Travis published his C1–C6 spectrum, Parshall released "Danger! New Directions in Contextualization."[12] Parshall notes the existence of a missions strategy where Christian missionaries were going to Islamic countries and claiming to convert to Islam. They would do the Islamic prayers yet substitute Christian words. They identified as Muslims in their local communities, hoping to become insiders and gain the trust of the local

[12] See Parshall, "Danger!," 404–10.

people. Once attained, the goal was to share the *Injil* with these friends and acquaintances, win them to Christ and start churches. Parshall writes, "Actually taking on a Muslim identity and praying in the mosque is not a new strategy. But legally becoming a Muslim definitely moves the missionary enterprise into uncharted territory. I address this issue with a sense of deep concern."[13] I agree with Parshall in his apprehension over this tactic. However, in all fairness, this was never an approach by John Travis. He responds to Parshall,

> The C-Spectrum is meant to show how groups of Jesus-followers who were born Muslim express their faith, not how cross-cultural workers among Muslims express theirs. Unfortunately the first article critiquing the C-Spectrum (Parshall 1998) focused much of its attention on a few foreign field workers who had assumed a Muslim identity to reach Muslims. This actually has nothing whatsoever to do with the C-Spectrum, yet the idea of cross-cultural workers "becoming C5" keeps resurfacing in C-Spectrum discussions.[14]

Travis goes on to side with Parshall rather than arguing against him. He states, "In our current situation I have counseled my own Christian background co-workers, especially the expatriates, to take on a C4 expression of faith, and not enter Islam to reach Muslims."[15] Therefore, Travis was not in favor of ex-pats taking on Muslim identity or vocabulary which would align themselves as part of their local Islamic communities.

This situation parallels a danger in Bible translation as well. There exists a strong desire to see Muslims come to faith. However, in their zeal to see their local friends come to faith, these workers go too far in their actions, taking on the identity and vocabulary of Muslims. This danger is ever-present in translation. Reported as recently as August 2022, several translations within the past decade among Islamic people have inserted the *shahada* into the biblical text. The editor, Mike Tisdell, adds,

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[13] Parshall, "Danger!," 404.

[14] John Jay Travis, "The C1–C6 Spectrum after Fifteen Years," Missio Nexus, October 2015, https://missionexus.org/the-c1-c6-spectrum-after-fifteen-years/.

[15] John Travis, "Must All Muslims Leave Islam to Follow Jesus?," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (October 1998): 411–15.

> Many translations today, including translations done by Wycliffe, SIL, UBS, Frontiers, the Navigators, and other organizations, have included the Islamic profession of faith in their Bible translations. They argue that the words *La ilaha illa Allah,* "There is no god but Allah," are the natural "functional equivalent" for biblical expressions of monotheism such as "Yahweh—*He* is God!" (1 Kings 18:39), or "For who is God, except Yahweh?" (Psalm 18:31), and therefore put this Islamic phrase into the Bible.[16] This, however, fails to recognize the difference between the meaning of biblical affirmations of monotheism and the Islamic meaning present in the words "There is no god but Allah." Whereas the Bible affirms that the only true God is Yahweh, the God of Israel, who is revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the words "There is no god but Allah" in Islam are always followed by the statement, "and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." Saying "There is no god but Allah," then, indirectly affirms Muhammad's prophethood.[17]

This information is quite disturbing. As demonstrated in chapter 3 of this dissertation, the contextual evidence in the *shahada* would point directly to Muhammad being a prophet. Furthermore, Relevance Theory would indicate that the implicature goes beyond him being a prophet but also affirms the Qur'an, denying the truthfulness of the Bible.

C5 Groups: Extreme Contextualization or Syncretism

As noted, it is possible for C5 groups to cross a line that goes beyond adjusting the method to be an effective witness for Christ and blends Islamic doctrines with Christianity. It is difficult to know when beliefs are compromised at times because the transition between contextualization and syncretism may be blurred. Nevertheless, three points will be addressed which should cause alarm for evangelicals considering the legitimacy of the Insider Movement (IM). First, proponents of the IM validate the prophethood of Muhammad. Second, advocates of this approach support believers' use of

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[16] The editor of this same article notes, "The words 'there is no god but Allah' (لا إلهَ إلاّ الله) are found in 1 Kings 18:39 in the Arabic *True Meaning* translation, recently produced by a Frontiers translator with Wycliffe/SIL help, and the Chadian Arabic Bible produced by Wycliffe/SIL and UBS in 2019. Likewise, the same phrase is inserted into Psalm 18:31 of the Arabic *Sharif Bible* (done with input from Wycliffe/SIL translators), the *Al-Zabbur* translation (done by Navigators translator Jeff Hayes), and the Chadian Arabic Bible." Mike Tisdell, ed., "'Son of God' Unresolved: Ten Years after a Landmark Petition, Translators Continue to Remove 'Son of God' and Insert Islamic Teaching into New Translations," *Journal of Biblical Missiology* (blog), August 1, 2022, https://biblicalmissiology.org/blog/2022/08/01/son-of-god-muslim-idiom-translations/.

[17] Tisdell, "'Son of God' Unresolved."

the Qur'an. Third, new believers are encouraged to remain in the mosque by those within the IM after salvation. In these three areas, IM proponents do not promote good fundamentals of evangelism, ecclesiology, or discipleship for MBBs.

First, within specific IM movements, followers of Jesus continue to believe in the prophethood of Muhammad. Harley Talman writes that it is not essential to "reject or denounce Muhammad or the Qur'an."[18] He further asks, "So does it really matter to God if one honors Muhammad and the Qur'an or not? From a biblical perspective, many would argue that it does not really matter to God, nor does it impact one's walk with God."[19] This statement seems dangerous among people such as the Berbers of North Africa, who spend their entire lives exalting the memory of their prophet. Nevertheless, when a Tamazight speaker comes to faith, Talman believes that the Bible suggests no cessation in this veneration. Ayman Ibrahim asks in response to Talman's question, "But where are the passages [in the Bible] Talman consults to establish this claim?"[20] Thus, a critical question the new believer should ask is, "What does the Bible say about that?"

John answers this question in his first epistle: "Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22). Indeed, when put in this biblical perspective, Talman must admit the challenges in honoring a man that denies both the Father and the Son. Ibrahim continues concerning Talman's argument, "Quite frankly, the major problem in his arguments is his elevation of human testimony over biblical witness."[21] Thus, according to the Bible, the

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[18] Harley Talman, "Muslim Followers of Jesus, Muhammad and The Qur'an," in Ibrahim and Greenham, *Muslim Conversions to Christ*, 125.

[19] Talman, "Muslim Followers of Jesus," 128.

[20] Ayman S. Ibrahim, "Who Makes the Qur'an Valid and Valuable for Insiders? Critical Reflections on Harley Talman's Views on the Qur'an," in Ibrahim and Greenham, *Muslim Conversions to Christ*, 141.

[21] Ibrahim, "Who Makes the Qur'an Valid," 141.

man who denies the Father and the Son should not be considered a prophet but instead from the spirit of the antichrist.

Interestingly, while Talman promotes the continued honor that Muhammad should receive, at least as a limited prophet, the new believers he quotes do not necessarily agree. He notes such an individual who "personally rejects Muhammad as a prophet, but does not declare this publicly."[22] Another follower of Christ developed "concerns and convictions about Muhammad, [but] never speaks against him."[23] Finally, one may refer to Muhammad by saying, "Yes, he is the prophet of Islam."[24] However, in all of these insider cases, the followers have realized that Muhammad is not a real prophet in a biblical sense. Instead, they must answer as the local authorities would have them speak. One can understand how believers seek to follow Christ and not publicly denounce Muhammad, especially where doing so invites the ire of the government or local religious zealots. Yet, James Walker warns that even if Muhammad is given a limited prophetic role, "Satan can use such theology to slowly inject poison into the body of Christ."[25] Nevertheless, Talman suggests waiting to pass judgment concerning Muhammad until more time has passed.[26] Walker offers a stern rebuke. He contends, "Talman is wrong. The history and fruit of Islam are well documented. The time for making a judgment was over a thousand years ago. No mystery remains. Muhammad's message and methods were the opposite of Christ's. Muhammad's fruit, documented in both the early Muslim, and non-Muslim writings, is clearly evil . . . Muhammad was one

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[22] Talman, "Muslim Followers of Jesus," 129.

[23] Talman, "Muslim Followers of Jesus," 130.

[24] Talman, "Muslim Followers of Jesus," 130.

[25] James Walker, "Why the Church Cannot Accept Muhammad as a Prophet," in Ibrahim and Greenham, *Muslim Conversions to Christ*, 105.

[26] Harley Talman, "Is Muhammad Also Among the Prophets?," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2014): 185–86.

of the false prophets Jesus warned us about."[27] Among the Berbers of North Africa, Walker's view can be considered accurate concerning the church and Muhammad's prophethood.

Second, proponents of the IM encourage the continued use of the Qur'an by followers of Christ. One can see the distinction between the following two types of groups. First, a believer encourages several close Muslim friends to meet and examine passages in the Qur'an and the Bible. In this first group, the goal is to use the Qur'an to gather people and get them to read the Bible, yet it does not equate the two books. Al Fadi, a pseudonym, warns, "I find it deeply concerning that anyone, even with the best intentions, would consider the Qur'an to be a source for the salvation of my Muslim people, placed on a par with the revealed Word of God, the Bible."[28] Reading and understanding the Bible, apart from the Qur'an, is the key to salvation and spiritual growth in discipleship meetings.

In this second group, after some of those same seekers believe in Christ, the MBBs continue to read the Qur'an for edification. IM advocates see this practice as normative. Jan Hendrik Prenger quotes an interviewee who states, "It is a qur'anic Jesus movement. They use the Qur'an in fellowships, but it is seen through biblical eyes."[29] Prenger further cites IM leaders who even suggest this type of reading takes place where no Bible is available. With no Scriptures to rely on, these gatherings seem dangerous as only the Jesus of the Qur'an becomes visible.

Jesus often spoke about life during his ministry. He said, "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt 4:4). He

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[27] Walker, "Why Church Cannot Accept Muhammad," 118.

[28] Al Fadi, "Biblical Salvation in Islam? The Pitfalls of Using the Qur'an as a Bridge to the Gospel," in Ibraham and Greenham, *Muslim Conversions to Christ*, 160.

[29] Jan Hendrik Prenger, *Muslim Insider Christ Followers: Their Theological and Missional Frames* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017), 263.

also stated, "I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). In studying the Qur'an, one finds a book that ultimately leads a person to death, by salvation through works. In contrast, Ben Naja suggests a saving knowledge from the Qur'an exists among believers in an IM from East Africa. He writes, "Although they primarily came to faith through Qur'an verses, they have now clearly reached a biblical understanding of Jesus and salvation."[30] While scant portions of Jesus's life are in the Qur'an, there is not enough truth therein to lead a person to faith in Christ. It teaches that Jesus is not the Son of God (Sura 17:111), not divine (3:59, 9:30–31), was never crucified (4:157), and that no atonement is necessary for mankind (17:15, 53: 38, 40). Furthermore, one may argue that rejecting the Qur'an is unnecessary for salvation. However, Jesus told his disciples that He wanted them to have abundant life, not just to be alive. Therefore, the best practice for Berber MBBs to follow is to set aside the Qur'an upon salvation and begin to examine what the Bible teaches about Jesus.

The third practice to critique is when an MBB is encouraged to remain in the mosque. Rebecca Lewis writes, "Insider movements can be defined as movements to obedient faith in Christ that remain integrated with or *inside* their natural community."[31] Lewis also defines this insider terminology as those who "remain inside their *socioreligious communities*, retaining their identity as members of that community while living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the authority of the Bible."[32] Thus, one believes in Jesus, yet tells his family, friends, and community that he is still a Muslim. The understanding by this community presumes that a professing Muslim still follows the ways of Islam, the Qur'an, and Muhammad.

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[30] Ben Naja, "Jesus Movement: A Case Study from Eastern Africa," in Talman and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 272.

[31] Rebecca Lewis, "Insider Movements: Honoring God-Given Identity and Community," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 26, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 16.

[32] Rebecca Lewis, "Promoting Movements to Christ within Natural Communities," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 24, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 75.

This approach contains two dangerous fallacies. First, the believer is encouraged to deceive his nearest community about what is most precious to them and himself, one's faith. There is no biblical justification for this type of dishonesty. Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven" (Matt 10:32–33). Proponents of the IM claim they are not disowning Christ as they call themselves *Muslim followers of Isa.* However, when someone continues to use the term *Muslim*, it comes with specific qualifications. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines a Muslim as a "follower of the religion of Islam."[33] *Collins Dictionary* states, "A Muslim is someone who believes in Islam and lives according to its rules."[34] *Webster's New World College Dictionary* defines a Muslim as an adherent of Islam.[35] Thus, in a very real sense, simply adjusting the word to a *Muslim follower of Isa* is a contradiction of terms. Concerning MBBs, Mazhar Mallouhi writes, "They do not see that faith in Jesus as Lord requires them to automatically renounce all that they previously learned about God, or to denounce their culture, [or] community."[36] However, there exists a real danger in fabricating a local tale of religion on the outside and attempting to live for Christ on the inside. Jesus told the rich young ruler to abandon his former life altogether, everything that he knew, and to follow Him (Matt 19:21). Furthermore, Jesus said to follow Him means to deny oneself (Luke 9:23). Yet, this type of stance that Lewis and others in the IM promote encourages believers to deceive those in their family and community purposefully.

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[33] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), s.v. "muslim."

[34] *Collins Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2007), s.v. "muslim."

[35] *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), s.v. "muslim."

[36] Mazhar Mallouhi, "Comments on the Insider Movement," in Harley and Travis, *Understanding Insider Movements*, 236.

The second fallacy comes when one attempts to justify remaining in the mosque by using the Bible. A typical example of this type of behavior is the story of Naaman. Kevin Higgins is a proponent of the IM, yet admittedly is questioning his former attempts to define and defend these movements. Higgins uses the story of Naaman after Elisha heals him from leprosy (2 Kgs 5:17–19). According to Higgins, Naaman requests Elisha to continue participating in practices outside the Jewish faith. Higgins suggests, "However, it is clearly an example in which a prophet of Israel gave permission to a person who continues to remain active in at least some actions and practices of their birth religion."[37] If Higgins is correct, he believes he has found a justification for MBBs to remain in the mosque.

Upon close examination of the text, one sees two essential points. First, Naaman realizes this practice is wrong and asks Elisha for forgiveness, not only once but twice. Secondly, Elisha does not seem to be giving Naaman permission to go and continue this practice but instead is offering forgiveness for what Naaman is obliged to do. A new believer in the Muslim world is facing this very challenge today. He came to believe in Christ through a radio broadcast, having never spoken or conversed with a Christian in person. His job is to give the call to prayer at the mosque five times each day. Upon salvation, he immediately knew he should stop, even though no person told him this. However, his parents do not want him to leave this position as it greatly honors the family. Therefore, for a brief moment, he is like Naaman and must fulfill this obligation even though he knows in his heart that what he is doing does not honor Christ. Since believing, he has met a Christian in person and is working towards a solution to his dilemma through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit.

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[37] Kevin Higgins, "The Biblical Basis for Insider Movements: Asking the Right Question, in the Right Way," in Ibrahim and Greenham, *Muslim Conversions to Christ*, 214.

In review, three points can lead to syncretism for Muslim followers of Christ. The first danger is attempting to justify the prophethood of Muhammad. The second hazard is the willingness to use the Qur'an alongside the Bible for believers. The third peril is the encouragement of MBBs to remain in the mosque after salvation. If one supposes these examples are exaggerations, one need only peruse Prenger's book *Muslim Insider Christ Followers: Their Theological and Missional Frames*. In his work, Prenger interviews multiple leaders of "IM and alongsiders" worldwide, some of whom still refer to themselves as Muslims.[38]

Below are several statements that those who claim to follow Jesus are making. Only their first names are given.[39]

- Axel (S. Asia): "My understanding is that the Qur'an does not contradict the Injil, if you read it in your own way, not the way taught in the madrasahs or by other teachers."

- Arthur (S. Asia): "We need more acceptance. The Qur'an, the Injil, the Tawrat, second Tawrat, the Psalms. We should put them all together in one place. If we really want peace, we have to respect all the Scriptures. We need a preaching system not by a father (i.e., pastor, priest) but by a mullah who takes the Qur'an and speaks openly, holding the Qur'an in one hand and the Bible in the other. And I say that all are unanimous [sic]."

- Ray (SE Asia): "For me as a Muslim, there is nothing wrong with the teachings of Islam, but the question becomes which teaching? If the teaching is based on the Qur'an, there is no problem.

- Ian (SE Asia): Concerning the Qur'an he states, it "gives an 'amen' to the gospel and confirms what was already written in the Scriptures 700 years before."

Thus, many within the IM do not support the uniqueness of Christ or the Bible. Muhammad and the Qur'an seem to have their place in this new form of worship, while

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[38] John and Anna Travis write, "The term alongsider refers to a follower of Jesus from another culture or area whom God has prepared to walk 'alongside' insiders in their faith journey with Jesus." John Travis and Anna Travis, "Roles of 'Alongsiders' in Insider Movements: Contemporary Examples and Biblical Reflections," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 30, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 161–69.

[39] These quotes are from interviews with believers who are part of the IM, in Prenger, *Muslim Insider Christ Followers*, 74.

believers in Christ continue to pray at the mosque. Ibrahim's critique of Talman can be applied to those in the IM who promote these ideas. He writes,

> To be frank, Talman's approach is harmful . . . . The problem with Talman's stance is not only methodological, but also conceptual. He does not examine the insiders' experience against the backdrop of the Bible. He allows their experience to flourish and, eventually, become prescriptive instead of descriptive. Talman actually discourages Christians from being fruit inspectors, because "it is [not] our role to assess the validity of their faith." Is this the biblical role of shepherds and elders in the church of God? Is the Church no longer required to practice spiritual discernment?[40]

Mature Christian believers must guard against this type of IM teaching worldwide and continue to "test the spirits whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone into the world" (1 John 4:1). Among the Berbers of North Africa, a clean break must occur from venerating Muhammad as a prophet, the use of the Qur'an for teaching, and continuing to attend the mosque for prayers. If not, the church will suffer in its growth, both numerically and in maturity.

The heavy contextualization used by C5 advocates also parallels dangers for Bible translators. If this relativism goes too far, Jesus may become just another prophet, and verses from the Qur'an may find their way into modern translation. Translators, too, must guard against these extremes. The answer is not to swing to the opposite end of the spectrum, which confuses the reader. Instead, a mediating approach allows believers to see the Bible in a contextually appropriate manner, giving honor to Jesus while breaking from the darkness of their past.

Discussion between Proponents and Critics of Differing Viewpoints

C1 and C2 churches have thrived for many centuries in what are now Muslim lands. Travis writes, "Thousands of these churches exist in the Middle East, Asia, and

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[40] Ibrahim, "Who Makes the Qur'an Valid," 151.

Africa, some of them predating Islam (e.g., Eastern Orthodox and Armenian churches)."[41] Proponents of these groups note their longevity and endurance amid difficult and sometimes persecuted circumstances. However, as some of these groups use foreign languages and outside cultures, critics will note their propensity towards extractionism.[42] An example of a C1 church is the imported version, using colonial language, foreign liturgy, unfamiliar music and instruments, or non-native dress. I understand the critic's hesitancy to promote these types of Christ-centered communities. Some of these churches, however, do use local language and would be considered C2 churches. Nevertheless, importing foreign worship forms can lead to profound misunderstandings. A common challenge in a T1 model is gender issues among newly converted Muslims suddenly placed in coed settings.

Florence Antablin gives another example of this importation of Christianity in an Islamic context:

> A church was . . . built in Kabul, Afghanistan. It was a 49-foot-high A-frame contemporary structure built to attract the international community of that city. It had been dedicated in the spring of 1970. Then after three years, government forces came in and completely demolished the building . . . . Would a different architectural style have made a difference? That is a question that may never be answered. But the question certainly must be raised whenever church building is undertaken in a country with large segments of its people or government hostile to a non-Islamic presence in their land.[43]

Although this church was constructed for foreigners, presumably any Christian would have been welcomed. Mark Williams comments on the building and subsequent

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[41] Travis, "C1–C6 Spectrum after Fifteen Years."

[42] I use the term *extractionism* with the meaning that as Muslims come to faith, they are pulled out of, or extracted from, their families and communities. However, with no support system, they will need to rely heavily upon the foreign or outside community. While possible, it creates a dependency upon outsiders in domains that a family can best meet. Additionally, if the foreigner leaves the area or country, the extracted individual has nowhere to turn.

[43] Florence Antablin, "'Islamic' Elements in Christian Architecture," in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, ed. J. Dudley Woodberry (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1989), 282.

destruction of this church in Kabul. He writes, "The implications of this case-study are obvious: with no apparent regard for the host Afghan culture, any Muslim seen entering this church would be considered converted and extracted—two characteristics of this traditional approach to church expression in a Muslim context. The Afghan government's reaction, therefore, should not come as a big surprise."[44] For in Afghanistan, to be an Afghan citizen, one is considered to be a Muslim. Thus, a convert entering a Western church building has turned his back on both his country and his religion.

Thus, constructing a model of a church acceptable to the West became highly offensive in Kabul. The destruction of this church demonstrates a profound miscommunication from the West. The builders hoped to erect a house in God's honor, but instead, they may have built an edifice honoring foreign culture. Indeed, one can see the similarities in importing a foreign language into a translation context. Translators who use low contextualization models in their texts can expect similar explosive reactions to their translations. At times, in the Tamazight project, the translation team uses Arabic words in the text if no other word exists. However, locals may see the term as foreign and possibly reject the text without seriously considering its message, much like the church in Kabul.

Therefore, on the left side of Travis's spectrum, one sees this model of low contextualization, which should not necessarily be considered a good strategy when working among Islamic peoples. Timothy Tennent observes,

> The C-1 to C-5 "spectrum" is often spoken of as moving from "low" contextualization at the C-1 end of the scale to "high" contextualization at the C-5 end of the scale. This particular use of the word "contextualization" is rather broad, referring to various ways groups have rejected or accommodated or embraced the particularities of a local context. In this general usage one could have "good" contextualization and "bad" contextualization. However, the word

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[44] Mark S. Williams, "Revisiting the C1–C6 Spectrum in Muslim Contextualization," *Missiology* 39, no. 3 (July 2011): 338–39.

> contextualization is also used more narrowly to refer to the goal of a process whereby the universal good news of Jesus Christ is authentically experienced in the particularities of a local context. Thus, what is called "low" contextualization may, in fact, not be contextualization at all, but an expression of ethnocentric extractionism.[45]

When viewed this way, C1 and low-level C2 churches should not be the model that missionaries seek to emulate in Islamic countries. As mentioned, a grave danger among Muslims is evangelizing them, leading them to faith, and then having them pulled out of their culture. Similarly, translations that use word-for-word models run the same risk while using vocabulary that local native speakers do not use. Their words isolate and push them away from the people with whom they need to share.

When working with C3–C4 churches, these groups move to the center of the contextualization chart. Parshall offers a model that may prove helpful for these groups. For comparison, see figure 11 (C1–C6 spectrum by John Travis) above.

Chart C

Low _____ High	Low _____ High	Low _____ High
Extractionism	Contextualization	Syncretism

Figure 12. Contextualization chart by Phil Parshall[46]

Parshall's Chart C demonstrates how contextualization is a wide range. Some groups will be at the lower end of contextualization, C2/C3, while others may contextualize more C3/C4. The challenge is not to allow the church to become extracted from society or

[45] Timothy C. Tennent, "Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques: A Closer Examination of C-5 'High Spectrum' Contextualization," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23, no. 3 (2006): 103.

[46] Tennent, "Followers of Jesus in Islamic Mosques," 103.

become exactly like the culture and move towards syncretism. This approach should also happen with the initial translations, not moving to either extreme.

Although C3 and C4 groups are committed followers of Christ, they use distinct labels when identifying themselves. C3 groups tend to call themselves Christians, while C4 communities will classify themselves as followers of *Isa al Messih*, or something similar. Many C3 believers who call themselves Christians feel that their lives will demonstrate a difference to those around them. C4 believers often feel that the cultural baggage that comes with the name Christian is too challenging to overcome. The Hollywood production of films with few morals reinforces this sentiment since they come from a country many worldwide consider to be a Christian nation.

The second distinction is the belief that Islamic culture and Islamic religion are not identical. A C3 believer may reject the Islamic *religious* labels, vocabulary, or cultural aspects that they find unbiblical while accepting what Travis refers to as "religiously neutral forms."[47] He further suggests, "A C3 group will seek to 'avoid forms that appear 'Islamic.' An underlying assumption of C3 groups, therefore, is that 'cultural' and 'Islamic' forms can be separated in Muslim societies. C3 groups would typically avoid using Muslim terminology."[48] A C4 believer seems to find this line more blurred and still participates in many local traditions, such as fasting during Ramadan, avoiding pork products and alcohol, and using Islamic vocabulary. Admittedly, this last distinction poses several challenges. On the one hand, if the C4 believer avoids all Islamic words, they risk being misunderstood. On the other hand, if their vocabulary never changes, they may still be seen as Muslim.

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[47] Travis, "The C1 TO C6 Spectrum," 408.

[48] Travis, "C1–C6 Spectrum after Fifteen Years."

However, a C4 group takes a different stance on these matters. Travis continues, "The C4, differs from C3 in that instead of avoiding Islamic forms (religious terminology, holidays, personal names, diet, dress, prayer posture, etc.), these groups retain them, *filling them where necessary with new biblical meaning*."[49] Interestingly, these groups strive to retain Islamic terminology and give these words new meanings. I noted above that C4 groups claim that the name Christian carries too much cultural baggage that many cannot overlook. However, if they can take Islamic terms and give them new meanings, a case might be made that they could take words such as "Christian" and do the same.

Paul Hiebert adds an essential point in transferring meaning in these cultural and religious forms. He writes, "The leader must also have a metacultural framework that enables him or her to translate the biblical message into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of another culture. This step is crucial, for if the people do not clearly grasp the biblical message as originally intended, they will have a distorted view of the gospel."[50] Thus, critical contextualization is necessary to present Christian thought to Muslim people. However, the same care must be taken when reassigning the Islamic forms mentioned above and critiquing whether they truly take on a biblical meaning. This process follows a similar testing method that translators use where locals decide on how these actions are understood.

Mark Williams presents an example from a C4 church would be as follows:

> The Bible reader and the preacher (always men) will start with the *Bismillah* greeting in Arabic before continuing to read or to preach in the indigenous language of the local Muslim people or in the predominant non-Muslim trade language. After preaching, there is community prayer done in similar fashion to salat (Muslim ritual-prayer), ending with the Muslim method of greeting at the end of salat. The

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[49] Travis, "C1–C6 Spectrum after Fifteen Years."

[50] Paul Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (July 1987): 106.

> more pronounced incorporation of Islamic elements into these worship gatherings accounts for the C4 status.[51]

Some of these actions are beneficial, many are neutral, and others are problematic. Reading from the Bible and prayer are undoubtedly helpful and edifying. Praying in a line as Muslims do or using a particular greeting is neutral. However, beginning prayer with the *Bismillah* would be troubling, especially if this is quoted verbatim from the Qur'an.[52] (Note, Williams does not state precisely how this preacher uses the *Bismillah*.) Quoting this text certainly strengthens the validity of the Qur'an as a holy book. Furthermore, anyone from the outside will understand the teacher giving strong credence to the Qur'an.

Overall, C1 and low-level C2 groups may appear too foreign and too low in contextualization to be effective for most Berber believers. These groups can extract the MBBs from their local culture rather than keeping them in their communities. C3 and C4 groups contain some very positive aspects, such as wearing local dress, eating their ethnic foods, and avoiding offensive actions toward locals. Paul writes extensively to this point in Romans 14, concluding, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (Rom 14:19). However, as high-level C4 groups approach C5 levels of contextualization, I am concerned that they can cross a line into syncretism. I see a strong parallel in translation as well.

Conclusion

In this section, I paralleled John Travis's C1–C6 spectrum with contextualization used in Bible translations. I believe that on both sides of his chart, there exist extremes that the church and Bible translators should avoid when working among

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[51] Williams, "Revisiting the C1–C6 Spectrum," 339–40.

[52] The *Bismillah* from the Qur'an states, "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful." Although this statement contains nothing contrary to Scripture, the former Muslim cannot help but return in his thoughts to the Qur'an and the reading of the *Bismillah* before nearly every Sura. A shortened form exists which states *Bismillah* (In the name of God) which may be acceptable in some settings.

Islamic peoples. C1 and C2 groups tend to appear foreign and may extract Muslims from the community they need to reach. C5 groups may look exactly like their lost culture and never make an impact due to syncretistic meanings infused in local actions. Therefore, a mediating approach to church planting and Bible translation balances the difficult task of reaching Muslims for Christ. I move on in the next section to examine the United Bible Societies's Greek New Testament (UBSGNT) and their rating of variants.

The Need for the UBSGNT

Although many copies of the New Testament exist, no known original autographs are extant. Instead, textual scholars rely on the many manuscripts recopied throughout the centuries. These manuscripts prove to be highly accurate. Nevertheless, variants did make their way into the text, creating the need for a Greek New Testament today which seeks to authenticate each of these variations.

A Concise History Concerning Transmission of Biblical Manuscripts

Early transcribers had the challenging job of hand copying, word by word, and page after page. Bruce Metzger notes, "Ancient scribes, when writing Greek, ordinarily left no spaces between words or sentences (this kind of writing is called *scriptio continua*), and until about the eighth century punctuation was used only sporadically."[53] With no spaces between words, the challenge of the scribe became even more difficult. The eye and mind needed to create breaks between words, making accurate copying an arduous task.

In the earliest centuries of Christianity, individuals copied texts for themselves, fellow believers, or to pass on to a congregation. However, this process changed as the

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[53] Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 22.

church began to grow. Metzger adds, "Because the number of Christians increased rapidly during the first centuries, many additional copies of the Scriptures were sought by new converts and new churches. As a result, the speed of production sometimes outran the accuracy of execution."[54] When Christianity received official status in the fourth century, copying texts moved to commercial book producers, known as *scriptoria*. Metzger writes,

> Sitting in the workroom of a scriptorium, several trained scribes, Christian and non-Christian, each equipped with parchment, pens, and ink, would write a copy of the book being reproduced as the reader, or lector, slowly read aloud the text of the exemplar. In this way, as many copies could be produced simultaneously as scribes were working in the scriptorium. It is easy to understand how in such a method of reproduction errors of transcription would almost inevitably occur. Sometimes the scribe would be momentarily inattentive or, because of a cough or other noise, would not clearly hear the lector. Furthermore, when the lector read aloud a word that could be spelled in different ways (e.g., in English, the words great and grate or there and their), the scribe would have to determine which word belonged in that particular context, and sometimes he wrote down the wrong word.[55]

Although the work was tedious, correctors who received special training to spot scribal errors would review these hand-copied manuscripts to limit false transmission. This process of copying continued into the Byzantine period.

As churches established monasteries, monks began to take over as biblical scribes. No longer working in groups, these men copied texts in individual cells. Although eliminating certain transmission mistakes which occurred in dictated settings, human error due to fatigue, insufficient lighting, or poor eyesight still remained possible. Additionally, the furniture, or lack thereof, also influenced how well the monk could copy. Metzger continues,

> Until the early Middle Ages it was customary for scribes either to stand (while making relatively brief notes) or to sit on a stool or bench (or even on the ground), holding their scroll or codex on their knees. It goes without saying that such a posture was more tiring than sitting at a desk or writing table, though the latter

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[54] Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 24.

[55] Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 25.

> must have been tiring enough to scribes thus occupied six hours a day, month after month.[56]

Additionally, there existed no writing utensil which gave continual ink. Daniel Wallace of the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts suggests, "Both reed and quill pens had to be dipped in ink every few words, which on occasion led a scribe to recopy or skip a word or line by accident."[57] Overall, the work must have been exhausting and highly monotonous. At least one scribe chose to pen his frustration in the margin, writing, "*Ardua scriptorum prae cunctis artibus ars est; difficilis labor est, durus quoque flectere colla, et membrana bis ternas sulcare per horas*," meaning, "The scribe has the toughest job of all; the work is drudgery, and you get a stiff neck from writing six hours day in and day out."[58] Thus one can see that, without electric lamps, eyeglasses, continuous feed from a ballpoint pen, and quite uncomfortable conditions, there existed the possibility for scribal errors in the text. Nevertheless, despite all these challenges, the text has been preserved with extraordinary accuracy. Eventually, handwritten texts would become a thing of the past with the invention of the printing press. However, even today, these early texts prove valuable for textual criticism and biblical scholars.

United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament

As the committee consulted multiple Greek editions, the UBSGNT stated purpose was, "To meet the growing need for an edition of the Greek New Testament specially adapted to the requirements of Bible translators throughout the world."[59] Furthermore, the text provides translators, pastors, and students with the possible variant

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[56] Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 28–29.

[57] Daniel B. Wallace, "What Did the Ancient Scribes Write With Part 2' Writing Instruments," Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts (podcast), 1:46–1:55, June 26, 2011, http://archive.org/details/podcast_scribal-methods-materials_what-did-ancient-scribes-w_1000411149412.

[58] Wallace, "What Did Ancient Scribes Write With."

[59] Kurt Aland et al., eds., introduction to *The New Testament in Greek and English: The Greek Text of the United Bible Societies*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1975), xii–xiii.

readings and offers a grading system. Their method offers insight into the committee's level of surety or doubt concerning the readings. The preface notes,

> By means of the letters A, B, C, and D, enclosed within "braces" { } at the beginning of each set of textual variants, the Committee has sought to indicate the relative degree of certainty, arrived at on the basis of internal considerations as well as of external evidence, for the reading adopted as the text. The letter A signifies that the text is virtually certain, while B indicates that there is some degree of doubt. The letter C means that there is a considerable degree of doubt whether the text or the apparatus contains the superior reading, while D shows that there is a very high degree of doubt concerning the reading selected for the text . . . . By far the greatest proportion of the text represents what may be called an A degree of certainty.[60]

According to its Metzger, this text was first produced in 1966 as an eclectic text based on the consulted work of the Wescott and Hort edition.[61] Additionally, the committee also made comparisons with other editions, "including those of Nestle, Bover, Merk, and Vogels, and to some extent those of Tischendori and von Soden."[62] The Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft published all their works in Germany, including the fifth edition printed in 2014.

With the vision for the first edition in 1955, the committee's choice to observe multiple Greek editions demonstrated that no single text would be the standard for every instance of variants. A. F. J. Klijn writes, "The discovery of the original text will not be in a MS or in a text. We shall have to hammer out the text of the original NT reading by reading, discussing every possibility."[63] Metzger adds, "Each set of variants [must] be evaluated in the light of the fullest consideration of both external evidence and internal

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[60] This grading scale is found in the following UBSGNT editions: 1st ed. , 2nd ed., 3rd ed., and 3rd rev. ed.

[61] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th rev. ed.)*(Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 10.

[62] Aland et al., introduction, viii.

[63] A. F. J. Klijn, *A Survey of the Researches into the Western Text of the Gospels and Acts* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 171.

probabilities."[64] Klijn's and Metzger's statements mirror the challenge of Bible translators searching for key biblical terms. There exist no shortcuts, and each challenge must be overcome one at a time. Furthermore, as languages change and churches mature in the faith, these key terms will need revisiting in subsequent translations.

The committee made several alterations in each subsequent edition of the UBSGNT, such as punctuation, letter ratings, and brackets (signifying "dubious textual validity"[65] or the possibility of later additions). Additionally, the editorial committee also adjusted the grading levels of certain variants. These changes occurred in the textual apparatus at the bottom of each page where a variant occurred. I present a figure demonstrating the first three editions and, most importantly, the fourth edition (see figure 13 below).

Noticeably, the textual variants and gradings remained relatively static within the first three editions, including a corrected third edition. However, when one observes the fourth edition, it becomes readily apparent that a significant shift has occurred. The alterations do not occur in only a few books. Instead the changes affect the entire New Testament.

In the figure below, Clarke gives the variants in each NT book with letter grades in the respective editions. For example, moving from left to right, the variants in the book of Luke appear. In the first edition (1966), there were 177 variants with the following grades: A-7, B-47, C-97, and D-26. In the second edition (1968), the variants in Luke are identical to the first edition. In both the third edition (1975) and the third Corrected edition (1983), the variant grades are only slightly different (177 variants in the third corrected edition: A-7, B-45, C-100, D-25). However, what is striking is the

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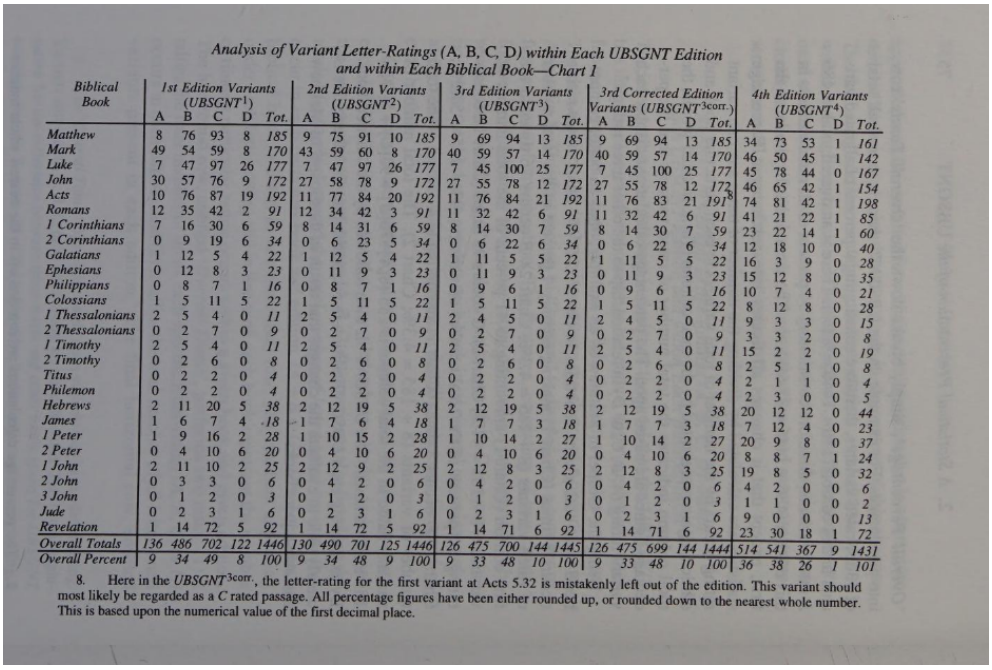
[64] Metzger, *Textual Commentary on Greek New Testament*, 16.

[65] Kent D. Clarke, *Textual Optimism: A Critique of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 59.

difference that occurs between the 3rd corrected edition (1983) and the fourth edition (1993). The variants in Luke in the fourth edition, totaling 167, received the following grades: A-45, B-78, C-44, and D-0. Therefore, one sees a tremendous upsurge in the marks received.

Clarke gives a similar summary of the book of Luke. He writes,

> The first four editions [1st, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd corrected] remain remarkably harmonious. However, in the UBSGNT4 we observe incredible divergence. A-ratings increase greatly from 4 percent (7 A-ratings in each of the four earlier editions) to 27 percent (45 A-ratings in the UBSGNT4). B-ratings increase to a large degree as well (between 45-47 in the first four editions climbing to 78 in the UBSGNT4). C-ratings take a dramatic drop from 56 percent down to 26 percent (from an average of 99 in the first four editions down to 44 in the UBSGNT4). But perhaps the greatest movement occurs in the D-rated variants, dropping from about 14 percent (from an average of 26 in each of the four earlier editions) down to 0 percent in the UBSGNT4.[66]



Analysis of Variant Letter-Ratings (A, B, C, D) within Each UBSGNT Edition and within Each Biblical Book—Chart 1

Biblical Book	1st Edition Variants (UBSGNT¹)					2nd Edition Variants (UBSGNT²)					3rd Edition Variants (UBSGNT³)					3rd Corrected Edition Variants (UBSGNT³corr.)					4th Edition Variants (UBSGNT⁴)				
	A	B	C	D	Tot.	A	B	C	D	Tot.	A	B	C	D	Tot.	A	B	C	D	Tot.	A	B	C	D	Tot.
Matthew	8	76	93	8	*185*	9	75	91	10	*185*	9	69	94	13	*185*	9	69	94	13	*185*	34	73	53	1	*161*
Mark	49	54	59	8	*170*	43	59	60	8	*170*	40	59	57	14	*170*	40	59	57	14	*170*	46	50	45	1	*142*
Luke	7	47	97	26	*177*	7	47	97	26	*177*	7	45	100	25	*177*	7	45	100	25	*177*	45	78	44	0	*167*
John	30	57	76	9	*172*	27	58	78	9	*172*	27	55	78	12	*172*	27	55	78	12	*172*	46	65	42	1	*154*
Acts	10	76	87	19	*192*	11	77	84	20	*192*	11	76	84	21	*192*	11	76	83	21	*191*[8]	74	81	42	1	*198*
Romans	12	35	42	2	*91*	12	34	42	3	*91*	11	32	42	6	*91*	11	32	42	6	*91*	41	21	22	1	*85*
1 Corinthians	7	16	30	6	*59*	8	14	31	6	*59*	8	14	30	7	*59*	8	14	30	7	*59*	23	22	14	1	*60*
2 Corinthians	0	9	19	6	*34*	0	6	23	5	*34*	0	6	22	6	*34*	0	6	22	6	*34*	12	18	10	0	*40*
Galatians	1	12	5	4	*22*	1	12	5	4	*22*	1	11	5	5	*22*	1	11	5	5	*22*	16	3	9	0	*28*
Ephesians	0	12	8	3	*23*	0	11	9	3	*23*	0	11	9	3	*23*	0	11	9	3	*23*	15	12	8	0	*35*
Philippians	0	8	7	1	*16*	0	8	7	1	*16*	0	9	6	1	*16*	0	9	6	1	*16*	10	7	4	0	*21*
Colossians	1	5	11	5	*22*	1	5	11	5	*22*	1	5	11	5	*22*	1	5	11	5	*22*	8	12	8	0	*28*
1 Thessalonians	2	5	4	0	*11*	2	5	4	0	*11*	2	4	5	0	*11*	2	4	5	0	*11*	9	3	3	0	*15*
2 Thessalonians	0	2	7	0	*9*	0	2	7	0	*9*	0	2	7	0	*9*	0	2	7	0	*9*	3	3	2	0	*8*
1 Timothy	2	5	4	0	*11*	2	5	4	0	*11*	2	5	4	0	*11*	2	5	4	0	*11*	15	2	2	0	*19*
2 Timothy	0	2	6	0	*8*	0	2	6	0	*8*	0	2	6	0	*8*	0	2	6	0	*8*	2	5	1	0	*8*
Titus	0	2	2	0	*4*	0	2	2	0	*4*	0	2	2	0	*4*	0	2	2	0	*4*	2	1	1	0	*4*
Philemon	0	2	2	0	*4*	0	2	2	0	*4*	0	2	2	0	*4*	0	2	2	0	*4*	2	3	0	0	*5*
Hebrews	2	11	20	5	*38*	2	12	19	5	*38*	2	12	19	5	*38*	2	12	19	5	*38*	20	12	12	0	*44*
James	1	6	7	4	*18*	1	7	6	4	*18*	1	7	7	3	*18*	1	7	7	3	*18*	7	12	4	0	*23*
1 Peter	1	9	16	2	*28*	1	10	15	2	*28*	1	10	14	2	*27*	1	10	14	2	*27*	20	9	8	0	*37*
2 Peter	0	4	10	6	*20*	0	4	10	6	*20*	0	4	10	6	*20*	0	4	10	6	*20*	8	8	7	1	*24*
1 John	2	11	10	2	*25*	2	12	9	2	*25*	2	12	8	3	*25*	2	12	8	3	*25*	19	8	5	0	*32*
2 John	0	3	3	0	*6*	0	4	2	0	*6*	0	4	2	0	*6*	0	4	2	0	*6*	4	2	0	0	*6*
3 John	0	1	2	0	*3*	0	1	2	0	*3*	0	1	2	0	*3*	0	1	2	0	*3*	1	1	0	0	*2*
Jude	0	2	3	1	*6*	0	2	3	1	*6*	0	2	3	1	*6*	0	2	3	1	*6*	9	0	0	0	*13*
Revelation	1	14	72	5	*92*	1	14	72	5	*92*	1	14	71	6	*92*	1	14	71	6	*92*	23	30	18	1	*72*
Overall Totals	*136*	*486*	*702*	*122*	*1446*	*130*	*490*	*701*	*125*	*1446*	*126*	*475*	*700*	*144*	*1445*	*126*	*475*	*699*	*144*	*1444*	*514*	*541*	*367*	*9*	*1431*
Overall Percent	*9*	*34*	*49*	*8*	*100*	*9*	*34*	*48*	*9*	*100*	*9*	*33*	*48*	*10*	*100*	*9*	*33*	*48*	*10*	*100*	*36*	*38*	*26*	*1*	*101*

8. Here in the *UBSGNT*³corr., the letter-rating for the first variant at Acts 5.32 is mistakenly left out of the edition. This variant should most likely be regarded as a *C* rated passage. All percentage figures have been either rounded up, or rounded down to the nearest whole number. This is based upon the numerical value of the first decimal place.

Figure 13. Analysis of variant letter ratings (Clarke)

[66] Clarke, *Textual Optimism*, 82.

In a subsequent chart, not presented, Clarke gives numerical and percentage changes for each NT book from the first four editions (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 3rd corrected) to that of the UBSGNT4.[67] Variant grades in all the books make similar astounding jumps in these letter grades. B grades move to A, C grades move to B, and D grades move to C. Furthermore, some variants move up two or even three grades (C to A, D to B, or D to A).

Clarke presents proof of the UBSGNT committee's dramatic change in grading variants in his book. Furthermore, he asks several critical questions. He queries,

> Are changes within the UBSGNT4 justified? Has the UBSGNT editorial committee based their alterations on valid and verifiable evidence? On the other hand, does a closer examination of this [fourth] UBSGNT edition disclose an unfounded letter-rating upgrade that may, based upon the presented quality and certainty of the UBSGNT4, instill a false sense of security in the text?[68]

Both Clarke and J. Keith Elliot hold strong reservations about the grading scale in general but even more about changing the variants' grading. Elliot notes,

> The bizarre and often criticized system of allocating rating letters to each variation unit has been preserved [from the third edition] . . . . The new editorial team voted on all the variation units and not merely on the ones new in this edition. As a result many of the rating letters in UBS4 have changed, thereby confirming our already formed opinion about the arbitrariness of the whole procedure.[69]

Thus, according to Elliot, the editorial team upgraded these variants on their own initiative. J. M. Ross addresses the situation in the earlier additions of the UBSGNT. He adds,

> Of course, every student of the NT has his own views on the probabilities of readings, but perhaps an impression may be recorded here—which remains in many instances in spite of the explanations in the committee's [Metzger's] Commentary—that often the editors have attached a high degree of probability (evaluation B or

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[67] The chart containing percentages can be found in Clarke, *Textual Optimism*, 77.

[68] Clarke, *Textual Optimism*, 121.

[69] James Keith Elliot, "The Fourth Edition of the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament," *Theologische Revue* 90, no. 1 (1994): col. 11.

> even A) to readings which others would consider much more doubtful or would even reject altogether.[70]

Therefore, these three scholars address the variant scale and the changing of the grades, which occur, in their opinion, for no logical reason.

The editorial committee presents their defense in the preface of the UBBGNT4 for the alterations of gradings in the variants from earlier editions. The most apparent reason for the significant adjustment in the variant levels is a shift in the grading scale itself. In all the previous editions, the letter ratings were as follows:

- the letter A signifies that the text is virtually certain.
- the letter B indicates that there is some degree of doubt.
- the letter C means that there is a considerable degree of doubt whether the text or the apparatus contains the superior reading.
- the letter D shows that there is a very high degree of doubt concerning the reading selected for the text.[71]

However, in the UBSGNT4, one finds the ensuing new delineations:

- the letter A indicates that the text is certain
- the letter B indicates that the text is almost certain
- the letter C, however, indicates that the committee had difficulty in deciding which variant to place in the text
- the letter D, which occurs only rarely, indicates that the committee had great difficulty in arriving at a decision[72]

Thus, in the earlier editions, there existed more skepticism in the level of the committee's confidence. The fourth edition presents a higher level of certainty from the committee's point of view. Clarke spends a considerable amount of his book *Textual Optimism* discussing possibilities for these and other changes in the variants. Metzger published his

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[70] J. M. Ross, "The United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament on JSTOR," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 95, no. 1 (March 1976): 118.

[71] These letter ratings are found in Aland et al., introduction, xii–xiii.

[72] These letters ratings are found in Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, eds., preface to *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993), 3.

Textual Commentary in 1994, one year after the printing of the UBSGNT4. In this work, Metzger offers the committee's reasonings for the changes in the grading of variants.

This brief introduction of the grading scale and its controversy has served to demonstrate two points. First, translators should seek to observe the grading of variants and apply it to Bible translation among Berber PGs. Secondly, translators must avoid becoming overconfident that their text is receiving higher marks than it should be. Testing with native speakers is the process to determine correct understanding.

Conclusion

The grading of variants in the UBSGNT offers a helpful tool for Bible translators among indigenous Islamic PGs. Whether the UBSGNT4 committee was overzealous in their changes is not my determination. Instead, the grading in our project is determined by how well listeners understand when hearing key biblical terms in context. The grades are not exact marks but represent a range of comprehension.

Rubric

The following rubric melds John Travis's C1–C6 model with the UBSGNT grading of variants. This tool may help translators in these minority languages under Islamic hegemony. The chart begins with a horizontal axis, using Travis's C1–C6 chart, although I will only use C1–C5. (The C6 is a group under severe persecution and does not apply to this translation project). I substitute the C in the chart for a T (for Translation), thus making it a T1–T5 chart.[73] In figure 14, the translations on the far left of the chart use low contextualization. Those in the middle use medium contextualization. Those to the far right use high levels of contextualization.

[73] Cf. figure 14 above, where I take Travis' word spectrum and create a visual image. This information is adapted from Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 407–8.

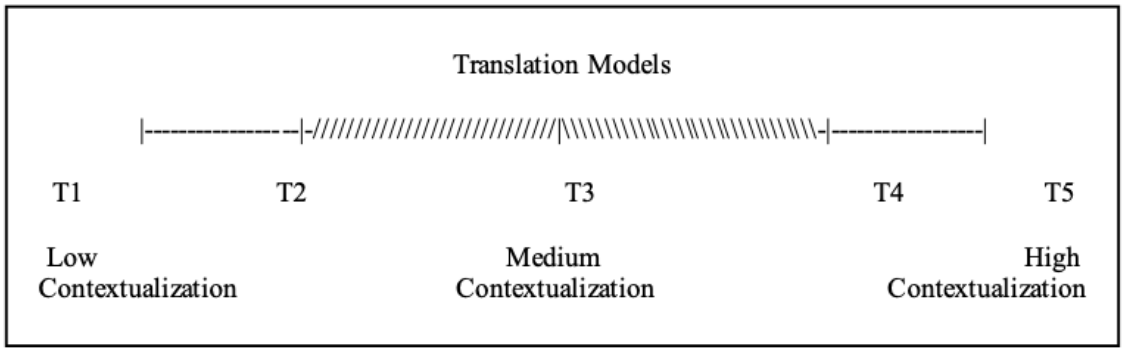

Figure 14. T1–T5 translation chart (Diss. author)[74]

Definitions of T1–T5 Translations

A T1 model would include low contextualization in the translation. In Travis's C1 model, the church meets in a foreign language. As a T1, the text would need to be in the local language but gives little to no explanation of geographic locations, Jewish customs, or names. This translation would prioritize Hebrew and Greek (as the Source Languages [SL]) grammar and syntax. The language sounds extremely foreign to locals and often gives many incorrect meanings when tested. At other times, the text may be unintelligible. The language may include key biblical terms imported from a colonial language. This translation will avoid Islamic language as much as possible. Foreign missionaries may use this as a study Bible for language learning and could give their approval as it remains accurate to the original languages. From a local point of view, this text may sound very Western, even though it should reflect Eastern (Jewish) views. If a T1 model is the only Bible available, local believers will struggle to understand the truth found within, especially local believers who are monolingual. An extreme T1 translation becomes an interlinear text useful for study purposes only.

[74] This chart is an adaptation from Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 407–8. I apply the idea to translation with T (Translation) replacing C (Christ Centered Community). To my knowledge, my chart is original.

A T2 translation will begin to add some explanations and, at times, give priority to the Receptor language (RL), but mostly follow the Source Language (SL). During testing, many locals will need help understanding the strange word order. Some local expressions may be included. In a written text, footnotes will supplement the Scripture to provide an explanation. The key terms are mostly imported Christian terms, if they exist, from a colonial language. Fortunately, the terms from the local language can represent a word or phrase that expresses the idea better. This text will still avoid Islamic language.

A T3 translation begins to sound much more natural in the local language, seeking to follow a more thought-for-thought process. The translators will differ sharply in their opinions over word choice as the priority is split or even favors the RL. The text will be understandable, while complicated phrases or places will receive explanations within the text itself. In a written text, footnotes will help explain intricate cultural matters. The language uses many local expressions instead of Christian words or terms imported from a colonial language. These key terms will prove to be extremely challenging to translate yet also fruitful as the meaning comes through more clearly. This text may attempt to explain key biblical terms in the local language, avoiding direct translation while attempting to avoid Islamic language also.

A T4 translation will resemble literature or story-telling from the local culture. This work prioritizes the RL grammar and syntax. People may ask if this is from their religion. Translators help explain geographic locations and cultural ideas that are implicit. Local translators will often understand this text better than foreign translators, so there is much for outsiders to learn about local worldviews. At times, the text may stretch the biblical truth and historicity beyond what may be correct or advised.[75] There can be a

[75] When translating the story of the midwives saving the Hebrew boys in the book of Exodus, a local expression was attempted in Exod 1:19. In the NASB the text reads, "The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before

danger if the text sounds too Islamic at points, reinforcing Muslim beliefs. Some specific terms, such as Son of God, should still be translated word-for-word to be explained by the Holy Spirit, pastors, and teachers. This text will begin to explore using Islamic language and rarely use the direct translation of key biblical terms.

A T5 translation gives the highest priority to the RL, using local language and religious ideas to communicate. Some local believers will protest that this text sounds like the Qur'an.[76] Most of the key biblical terms will use Islamic expressions. There is a strong possibility that readers or listeners confuse Islam and Christianity in this text. Footnotes need to explain ideas as not being Islamic. This type of translation will lead people to syncretism if not balanced with sound biblical teaching from outside sources. If a T5 model is the only Bible available, local believers will struggle to understand the difference between Christianity and Islam.

This T1–T5 spectrum may not be accurate if one looks only at individual words or chapters. The translator's goal is to look at the big picture and how the team uses key biblical terms. Equally important is how the audience understands those terms. If the team feels they have created a perfect mediating translation, but no one comprehends the message or it leads them back to Islamic doctrine, then the text has failed in producing the proper meaning for the intended audience. I emphasize that a medium contextualization field is not always a T3 translation. The purpose of the text determines the acceptable range on the spectrum. For example, many children of Tamazight speakers

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the midwife can get to them." The suggestion was to use a Berber phrase which would replace, give birth with go to the ropes. This expression is used as women who are close to delivering hang ropes over beams in their homes. They then put padding over these ropes so they can rest their weight under their arms and be in a suspended seated position, allowing gravity to help the child arrive. When tested, everyone understood that the women are vigorous when they go to the ropes as meaning, when they give birth. However, historically speaking, the text gives no indication that the Hebrew women used the same aid in having children. Thus, not wanting to change the historical account, the team chose to use the word to birth, instead.

[76] While preparing this dissertation, I was in contact with a national member of the Tamazight translation team. I read him a verse from the Sharif Bible, which contains heavy uses of Islamic vocabulary. He recognized the version and referred to it as an Islamic Bible translation.

understand the language when spoken to but do not *speak* it at a high level. Therefore, the text should shift towards a T4 model, using more local language and a lower academic register. On the other hand, as Christianity grows, pastors may need tools that offer more insight into original texts. Thus, a translation leaning toward T2 might be more acceptable. In this dissertation, I argue for a mediating approach as the first translation among Indigenous Islamic PGs. Currently, few pastors need T1/T2 tools, and a T4/T5 translation will likely lead their audience back to Islam. Thus, a mediating approach is in the medium range of contextualization, which meets the needs of most Berbers today. Ultimately, I advocate for multiple translations in the Berber languages.[77]

Merging of Charts

The next section of the chart employs the UBSGNT grading variants. The team tests key terms with native speakers in a biblical context. The hearers' response determines the grade it receives, and the letter grades correspond to percentages.

- If the hearer understands completely, the key term receives an A: 76–100 percent.
- If there is some doubt or slightly incorrect definition, the key term receives a B: 51–75 percent.
- If there is considerable doubt or a mostly incorrect definition, the key term receives a C: 26–50 percent.
- If there is no understanding or a wrong definition, the key term will receive a D: 0–25 percent.

There is also a second way to look at the chart. Often, with key biblical terms, the hearer understands the term correctly (A) or completely misunderstands it (D). Thus, the percentages would work out as follows. In the testing of 20 people, 8 recognized the term *sin* correctly, while 12 did not comprehend the term at all or had a completely

[77] Beyond the first mediating translation for the Berbers, I recommend further translation work. These T2 and T4 translations will prove valuable not only on their own but also to supplement a T3 translation. Each work builds upon the other, creating deeper understanding, and ultimately a stronger faith.

wrong understanding. In this case, the word would receive a grade of 40 percent, or a C. This letter notifies the translation team that this term needs additional research and testing. Furthermore, the team understands that the term may become better understood as biblical literacy and discipleship grow.

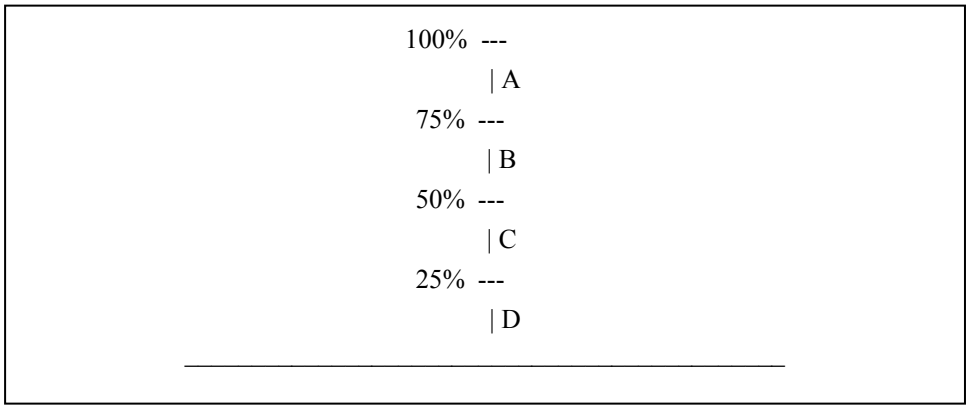

Figure 15. Part 1: T1–T5 translation chart

The goal for the Bible translation team is always for complete comprehension of the text. However, as mentioned many times, the meaning is often skewed or misinterpreted when Berbers filter these terms through their Islamic worldview. Realizing that while some terms receive high marks, As and Bs, others will receive low grades, Cs and Ds. The good news for current or subsequent translation teams is that they know which terms need the most work, rather than putting their efforts towards all words or guessing which terms need attention. The rubric itself does not solve the challenge of finding correct key biblical terms. Instead, it identifies which words are best understood and those that need revision.

In merging these charts, I hope to visualize how a meditating approach is helpful for first translations among indigenous Islamic peoples. Often the extreme ends of the spectrum demonstrate areas where the terms are not well understood. Although Issa Diab writes for a Middle Eastern context, this model follows his suggestion where the middle of the spectrum, what he would call a "cultural mediation," gives the best hope for Berbers to comprehend the Bible's meaning.[78]

The Tamazight translation team discovered the rubric by using the following procedure. We often began using a word-for-word translation as we tested key biblical terms. However, typically, using terms with low contextualization resulted in low comprehension. As the terms began to use more contextualization, the participants better understood these words, or often explicative phrases. Nevertheless, when the words began to move more towards Islamic terminology, or high contextualization, the comprehension levels began to drop again. I note that often these words were understood but only in their Islamic meaning. In chapter 3, I demonstrated all of these examples with the word temple in Tamazight. With low contextualization, the word had no meaning or

[78] Issa Diab, "Challenges Facing Bible Translation in the Islamic Context of the Middle East," *Bible Translator* 61, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 79.

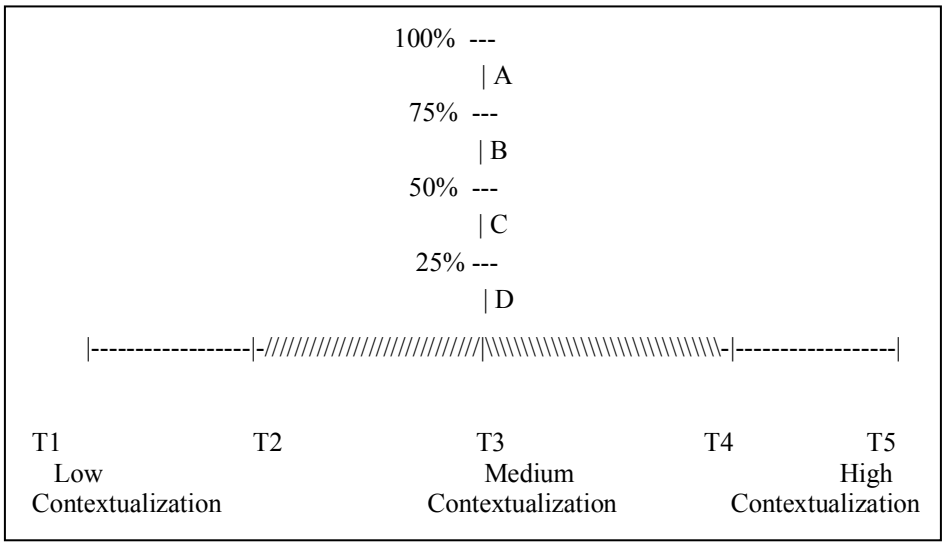

Figure 16. Translation rubric (Diss. author)[79]

the wrong meaning. With high contextualization, the word carried an Islamic connotation and was incorrect. The best understanding came from a mediating approach, with an explicative phrase for the temple, the house of the Lord of the Jews. Overall, the result looks like a typical bell curve, with low and high contextualization at the far extremes. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate the Tamazight words we tested to validate our findings.

I now model this rubric with a word in English: propitiation. While working on this dissertation, I had the opportunity to lecture for one month in an undergraduate World Religions class at Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky. The forty-five students ranged from approximately 18 to 23 years old, and all professed to be Christians. I note that all of these students were literate adults at a Christian college. I told the students I was taking an informal survey, and their answer was not for a grade, as I did not desire to

[79] To my knowledge, this chart is original. I combine Travis's work with the grading of variants found in *The Greek New Testament*. See Travis, "The C1 to C6 Spectrum," 407–8; Aland et al., *Greek New Testament* (3rd ed.).

create what Barger calls an "intimidating experience" while testing.[80] I read 1 John 2:2 to them: "And He Himself is the *propitiation* for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world" (NKJV). I asked for a show of hands on how many understood the word *propitiation* in this verse; approximately 4 or 5 hands went up. I asked those students who raised their hands if they could verbalize the word's meaning. Only one of those five students said he could. I did not ask him to define it as he could have influenced my next question. Thus, only one was sure of the meaning. Approximately four felt they had some understanding, while the other forty students had no understanding.[81] This example demonstrates testing a key biblical term with low contextualization.

I then read the same verse in the NIV: "He is the *atoning sacrifice* for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). I requested a show of hands for those understanding the explicative phrase, *atoning sacrifice.* About half of the students raised their hands. I questioned again if those who raised their hands could verbalize what the phrase *atoning sacrifice* means. I did not count, but almost all those same students raised their hands again. I asked those who left their hands down if they did not understand the term *atoning sacrifice.* Only one student answered, saying she would like more context than just one verse to reply if she understood well. This example demonstrates a key biblical term with high contextualization.

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[80] I purposely chose the word *survey* with these students. The word *testing* can create anxiety and cause the listener to give answers for the best grade rather then what they understand. Additionally, they may produce an answer they feel the tester desires. For further reading on testing see Donald Barger, "Toward the Development of a Bible Storying Evaluation Model Utilizing a Synthesis of Bible Translation Consultation Methods" (PhD diss., Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 2020), 124.

[81] After taking my initial survey, I immediately replaced the word *propitiation* with the word *expiation* for the class. No student understood the meaning of this word.

Finally, I reread the NIV with one change: "He *satisfies God's wrath* which was because of our sins, and not only because of ours but also for the sins of the whole world." I requested a show of hands, and nearly everyone raised their hands. I asked if those who raised their hands could verbalize what the explicative phrase, *satisfies God's wrath*, means. Nearly everyone in the class raised their hands in the affirmative. This example demonstrates a key biblical term with a mediating approach, using a middle level of contextualization (see figure 17 below).

Admittedly, this survey was informal and in an open environment. Thus, the data is not scientific and only an unofficial survey. However, I had limited opportunity to ask this group of Bible students these questions. Some of the challenges of this type of testing are (1) other students voting might affect their neighbors; (2) previous questions could have clued the listeners into the meaning; (3) as one student noted, I may have needed to provide more context. Similar challenges occur in Bible translation settings, which make for a less-than-perfect environment. Barger writes, "The best way to test the translation is to perform the evaluation in an on-site community testing with people who have not previously interacted with the translation and are unfamiliar with the verses being tested."[82] The challenge of using first-time hearers becomes extremely difficult as, even within a passage, phrases and key biblical terms repeat themselves. Thus, after the first few examples, the listeners are no longer first-time hearers. Nevertheless, the testing did supply me with adequate results.

Figure 17 demonstrates what occurred in this study. The dashed line indicates what I believe should have happened. I anticipated fewer individuals would understand highly religious words, such as *atoning sacrifice.* However, as Bible students, many have heard these words in church and on campus. Thus, their exposure to highly Christian

[82] Barger, "Toward the Development of Bible Storying," 120–21.

terms would affect their comprehension and assessment. Mick Foster suggests to "test how well the average person understands it."[83]

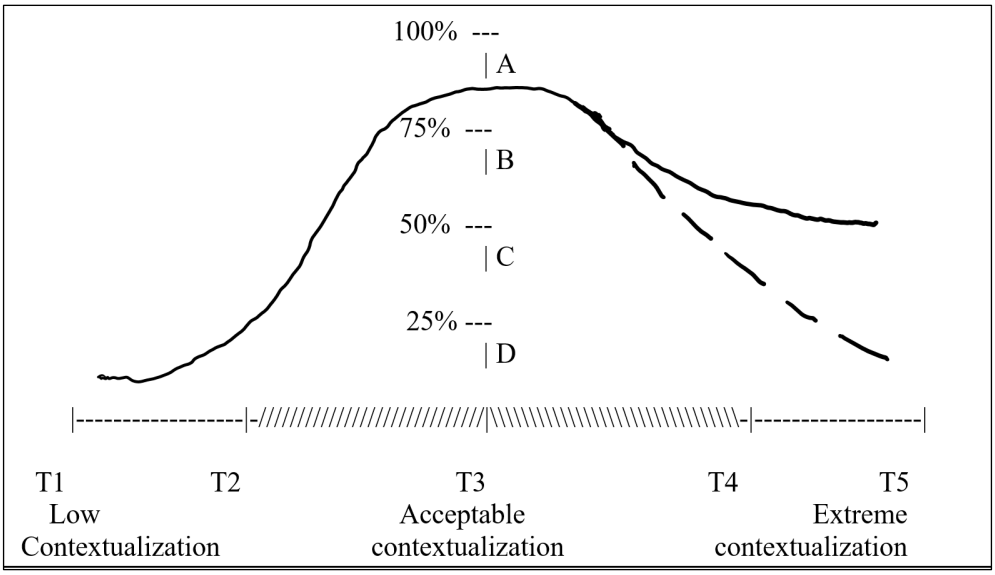

Figure 17. Translation rubric demonstrating *propitiation* (Diss. author)[84]

Among these listeners, I sampled how well the average Boyce college student understood the text. In the end, I witnessed that, even in a Bible college environment, low and high contextualization produced less understanding than terms using a mediating approach. This information replicates what I have seen in testing key biblical terms in Tamazight among the Berbers.

[83] Mick Foster, "Field Testing in Russia and Central Asia," *Notes on Translation* 14, no. 3 (2000): 24.

[84] Testing of the words propitiation, atoning sacrifice, satisfies God's wrath. Data collected by author at Boyce College, Louisville, Kentucky, Spring 2022.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I observe John Travis's C1–C6 spectrum, demonstrating low, medium, and high levels of contextualization among Muslim PGs. Both ends of his spectrum reveal tendencies towards syncretism. The low end extracts the believer(s) and moves them toward foreign culture, and the high end shifts the believer(s) towards Islamic doctrine and practice. Neither of these extremes is helpful for church planting among the Berbers. The healthiest model is a mediating approach.

The UBSGNT presents a model for a grading scale for variants. Although disputed in its original use as being too subjective, the graph proves helpful in testing key biblical terms. One can use listeners to determine more objectively how well they understand these terms. Their answers produce percentages and letter grades for each word or phrase the team tests.

When I merge the charts, one visualizes how a mediating approach offers the best example for first translation projects among indigenous Islamic PGs. Both extremes lead to less understanding than examples given with medium contextualization. In the next and final chapter, I demonstrate similar findings as we tested several key biblical terms in Tamazight.

CHAPTER 5

DEMONSTRATING THE RUBRIC WITH INDIGENOUS KEY BIBLICAL TERMS

This dissertation argues that translators among indigenous non-Arabic speaking, Islamic peoples should translate the first Bible into their language using a mediating approach. People groups such as the Berbers of North Africa currently do not have the resources to clearly understand a Bible that is too low in contextualization, such as T1, or one that is too high in contextualization, such as T5. This type of translation has the potential to lead to syncretism and a reinforcement of Islamic beliefs. Instead, a balanced approach is necessary for the first translation among these PGs. Historically, translators have wrestled between two extremes: form and meaning. Theories on contextualization and Relevance Theory point towards mediating translations that will best convey the authorial intention of the Bible. In the previous chapter, I combined John Travis's C1–C6 model with the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (UBSGNT) grading of variants to create a rubric for Bible translators. The goals of the rubric are as follows:

- The tool allows the listeners to decide what percentage of native speakers understand the key biblical terms, and where further research is necessary.
- This tool may be more objective if the translation team targets a specific type of translation such as T2 or T4. The audience determines what type of translation is necessary.
- This tool can aid the team in determining where the translation falls on a spectrum. A larger percentage of T1 words moves the text towards lower contextualization. A larger percentage of T5 words moves the text towards higher contextualization. Terms using a mediating approach will place the translation more in the T3 range. Thus the team can decide more objectively if they have achieved their intended goal by visualizing where the words appear on the rubric.

- The rubric may help the translation team from slipping into word-for-word translation, which is relatively easy. This danger can occur from either side of the spectrum, and the rubric serves as a form of checks and balances.

Adding Terms to T1–T5 Chart

The following procedure is recommended for adding words to the T1–T5 chart. The word Berberized means to take an Arabic (or foreign word) and adapt it to the Tamazight language. Nearly all languages take foreign words and adjust them to their way of speech. An example in English of Anglicizing a word is the word Spain, coming from the Spanish word *España*.

T1. This term is taken from an Arabic Bible directly, often transliterated or Berberized. An example is the word for church (*kanisa*).

T2. This term is a T1 word with a qualifier added. An example is taking the word for grace and attempting to clarify it, underserved grace (*namt na or istahalch*).

T3. This term is taken from the local language, often used in a daily, non-religious context. An example is the term for baptize (*ghbz*).

T4. This term is a T5 word with a qualifier added. An example is the word for Jerusalem, Qods, with the word city added; the city of Jerusalem (*tamdint n Qods*).

T5. This term is taken from the Qur'an or local Islamic usage, often transliterated or Berberized. An example is the word used for Jesus (*Sidna Aisa*). This uses the name *Aisa* for Jesus plus the honorific title, Lord (*Sidna*).

Tamazight Words in the Rubric

While translating the Tamazight text, the team discovered a process that worked well for their needs. An important consideration is that this project is published as an audio Bible and not currently as a printed text. This distinction prohibits footnotes that might otherwise explain difficult terms and passages. While this tool is not a translation theory, the rubric may help translators in minority languages where their translation falls on a spectrum to specify which words need further evaluation. Glen Kerr adds,

> Whether we reach a single general theory of translation in the near future is unclear, and in fact may not be desirable, as the dominance of dynamic equivalence in the past may indicate. The idea of "picking one theory and hanging on for dear life" seems to be an approach that should be avoided, as well as the approach to ignore all theoretical and systematic approaches and "just be an artist." More practical for translators everywhere is probably a more eclectic approach, or at least a more sensitive approach to the dangers of adopting one theory, approach, or outlook.[1]

Thus, I pray that aspects of this rubric may help translators who seek to give their PG the Bible in the clearest, most accurate, and most natural way possible.[2]

Due to security, the testing occurred with a limited number of listeners, typically twenty or less. These individuals represent a range from those with university education to those with only the basics of primary education. The participants were men and women, old and young, Christian and Muslim. The translators typically did not feel safe testing outside of their extended family. Thus, nearly all of these testers were related in some way to the translation team.

First Term in Rubric: Priest

Priest was the first word used in the rubric. The team translated their initial draft while consulting several Arabic Bibles. Therefore, the key biblical terms typically begin as T1.[3] The word for priest in Arabic is الْكَاهِنِ, *al-kahen*, which became أكهّان, *akhan*, in Tamazight. We tested this word with approximately twenty listeners. We told them that Jesus healed a leper and then read Mark 1:44 several times. The text reads, "And he said to him, 'See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest (*akhan*) and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'" Over 80 percent of the listeners understood this word to mean a priest who practices divination,

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[1] Glen J. Kerr, "Dynamic Equivalence and Its Daughters: Placing Bible Translation Theories in Their Historical Context," *Journal of Translation* 7, no. 1 (2011): 16.

[2] These three principles of Bible Translation are found in Katherine Barnwell, *Bible Translation* (Dallas: International Translation Department, SIL, 1992).

[3] A testing procedure beginning with T5 terms could be just as valid. In either case, one would expect that key biblical terms are best understood as they move away from the far ends of the spectrum toward the center of the chart.

black magic, or sorcery. Approximately 20 percent of the listeners did not know the word at all. There were some Christians in the group who knew the Arabic text and understood in context what *akhan* meant. However, they also acknowledged that the Berber word means a type of sorcerer or warlock and does not give the correct connotation. Thus, in the rubric, the word would appear as follows.

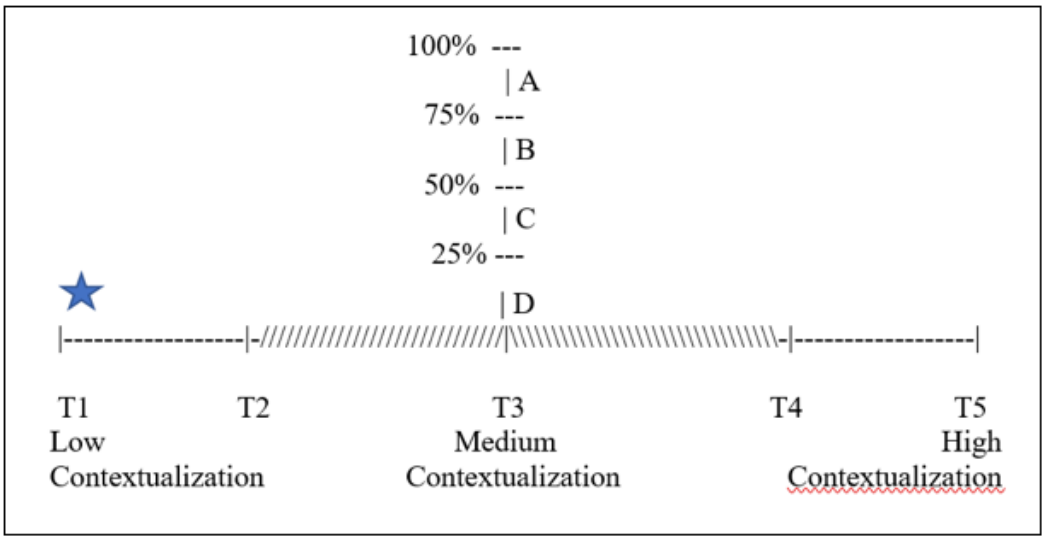

Figure 18. Term with low contextualization: priest

Note: ★ = *akhan* (priest)

Akhan produced low contextualization for the listeners. This translation brings much confusion to Mark 1:44: "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the *priest* and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." In this case, Jesus is sending the leper to a warlock and aligning Moses with witchcraft. Therefore, this translation failed in the authorial intention and received a D grade as a T1 translation.

Next, the team attempted a word on the opposite end of the spectrum, *a local leader of the mosque* and expert in the Qur'an, الفقيه (*al fqih)*. Everyone understood this

man to be the head preacher at the mosque, the one who delivers the Friday sermon, and the one who is knowledgeable in the Qur'an. He is often invited to major local events, such as weddings or parties, and leads the men in group chanting of qur'anic passages. Thus, in the case of Mark 1:44, the term fails to communicate properly. Even with the context of the biblical story, all of the listeners understood that Jesus was sending the leper to the leader of the mosque. Several participants knew the story and laughed, saying that this word was incorrect and could not be used. They also noted that *al fqih* performs magic services on the side for extra money by giving certain *ayas* (verses) from the Qur'an to heal sickness or cast spells. Thus, this highly contextualized term received a D grade as a T5 translation.

We attempted to add a qualifying word *al fqih n udain* (of the Jews). This term had better reception, around 30 percent, as some understood that he would perform similar services for the Jews. However, many questioned if Jesus sent the healed man to the mosque to see *al fqih n udain.* This problem added further confusion as to whether mosques existed at the time of Christ. Thus, there was a partial understanding, but the Islamic understanding blocked this term as a possible solution. The term *al fqih n udain* (leader of the mosque for the Jews) received a slightly better grade (C). Both terms are on the figure below.

The team attempted a third word for the term priest, ⵏ-ⵡⴰⴷⵉⵏ ⴰⵏⴱⴰⴷⴷ ⵏ ⵜⴰⴷⴷⴰⵔⵜ ⵏ ⵔⴱⵉ, *anabdad n tadart n rabi n udain* (the manager of the house of God for the Jews). The term carried the proper meaning with nearly everyone (80 to 90 percent). They understood a man who would work in a place where Jews worship God, although they were uncertain what he did for this job. The minority who did not understand were confused about how a manager would run the house of God. This word *anabdad* can also be a store or office manager. Nevertheless, the major challenge with this word was its length.

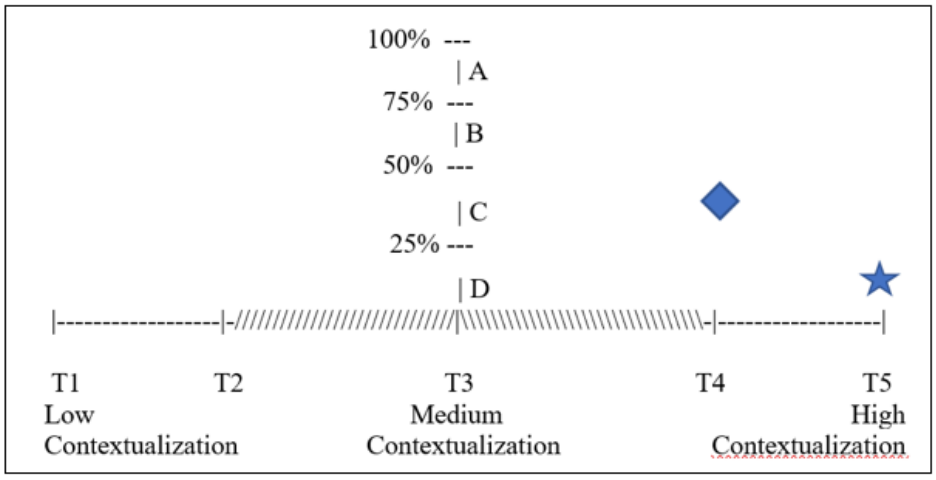

Figure 19. Term with high contextualization: priest

Note: ★ = *al fqih* (priest); ◆ = al fqih n udain (priest of the Jews)

At times, the word may be repeated several times in a chapter or a verse and becomes fatiguing to the listener. Thus, although the word did carry the proper meaning, further testing needs to be done. The team needs to see if the phrase can be used in the long form at the beginning of the chapter and a shortened form later. This term, using medium contextualization, received an A.

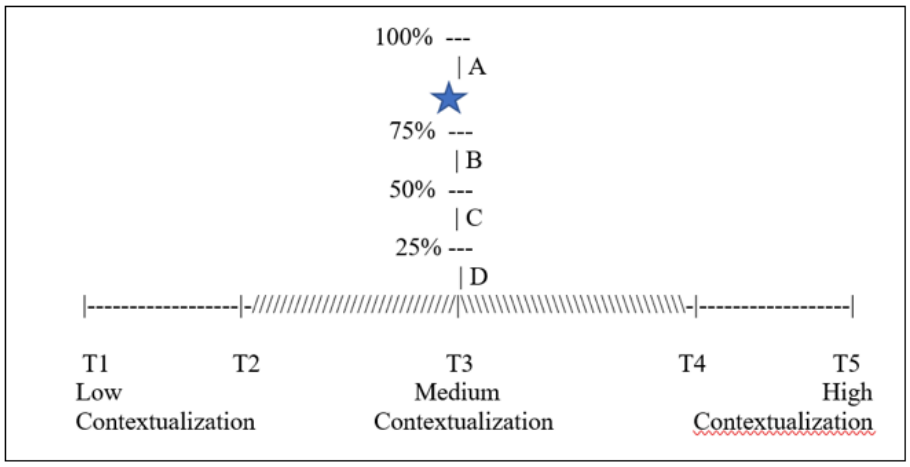

Figure 20. Term with medium contextualization: priest

Note: ★ = *anabdad n tadart n rabi n udain* (manager for the house of the Lord of the Jews)

Second Term in Rubric: Baptize

Another challenge in the Tamazight translation project is the word for *baptize*. The history lessons from King James note that this is not the first time the word has faced challenges in translating, nor will it be the last. The first example for the term baptize is ⵏⵄⵎⵎⴷ, *iA3med* (the 3 notes an ayin, a strong guttural A-sound in this word). When tested, the word carried little meaning outside of those Christians who knew the word from Arabic. Without this knowledge from the Bible, there was no understanding.

Matthew 3:11 reads, "As for me, I *baptize you with water* for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will *baptize* you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The team added the phrase *g waman*, meaning *with water*, and these two words were understood. However, it was unclear what John the Baptist wanted to do with water. The term *iA3med* gave no comprehension of the biblical meaning of baptism. Therefore, this translation failed the authorial intention and received a D grade as a T1 translation.

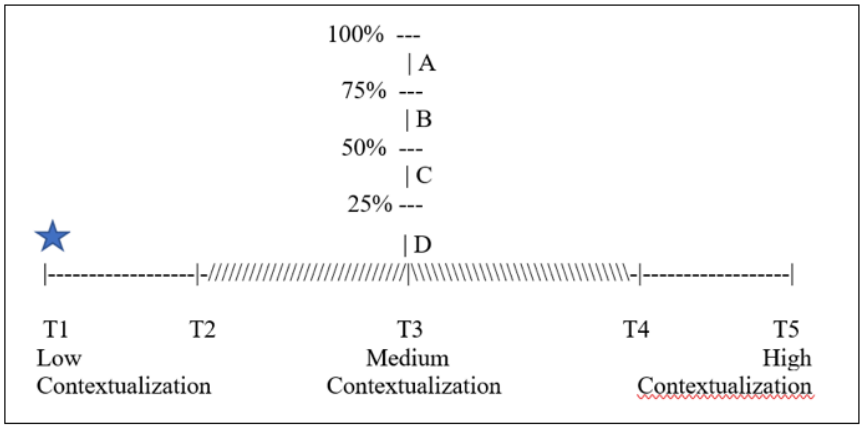

Figure 21. Term with low contextualization: baptize

Note: ★ = *iA3med* (to baptize)

The team suggested another term from the Qur'an, صِبْغَةَ (*sbgha*) for baptize. In Arabic, the word gives the idea of coloring a fabric, to dye it by *dipping* it in a colored liquid. Yusuf Ali translates Sura 2:138 as, "(Our religion is) the Baptism of Allah: And who can baptize better than Allah? And it is He Whom we worship." However, when tested, the modern word gives Berbers the meaning of painting or dyeing something in a physical sense. In a symbolic sense, it means to enter into Islam with one's entire being. Nearly everyone (80 percent) said this word, in a figurative sense, is highly linked to Islam and does not mean to dip a person. The team also suggested adding *with water*. The listeners noted this addition, yet it did not help in comprehension. They understood the word in its symbolic qur'anic meaning, but it did not translate well as a term for baptism. Therefore, this translation failed the authorial intention and received a D grade as a T5 translation.

A term that has been received well by listeners is the word *to dip*, غبّاز (*ghbz*). The word is used in daily life when someone is washing clothes by hand. A shirt, for example, is put under water and fully immersed. Everyone (100 percent) understood this word in this physical sense.

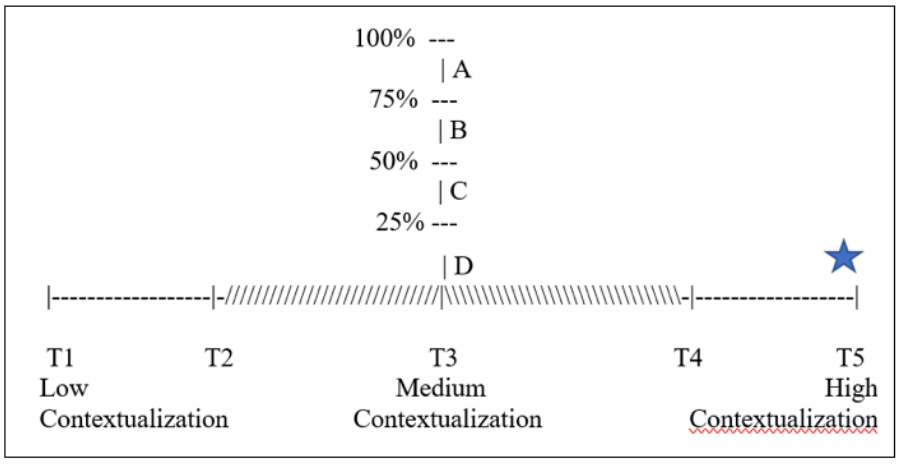

Figure 22. Term with high contextualization: baptize

Note: ★= *sbgha* (to color/ dye)

The team read Luke 3:16: "As for me, I *baptize* you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will *baptize* you with the Holy Spirit and fire." We questioned the listeners about the first use of baptize in this sentence. More than three-quarters (80 percent) understood that John would put a person underwater. However, only about one-half of those listeners (40 percent) understood from the context that John would baptize them if they turned from their sin (Luke 3:3). These Christian listeners understood that this dipping is a symbol of one's faith when one receives the Holy Spirit. Most probably, this last answer has to do with prior knowledge and does not entirely come from the translation. No one in the group understood what *baptized you with the Holy Spirit and fire* meant. Several discussed a possible baptism by immersion in fire yet came to no conclusions.

A humorous moment did arise in the testing of this word. One lady said that when she dips her clothes to wash, she does it multiple times. She noted that whoever dipped the new believers only needed to do it once.

Thus, this word did not give a complete Christian understanding to those with little knowledge of the Bible. However, the word did improve the understanding and gave a mental picture of a person immersed in water. There was a possible link to Islam with this word as one could be fully immersed into its beliefs. In the context, the listeners understood *ghbz* as baptism into Judaism or Christianity in Luke 3. Although 80 percent of the listeners understood a person being immersed in water, only about 40 percent understood it had a meaning related to repentance, thus dropping the grade. This term using medium contextualization, received a B/C, with a mark of 50 percent.

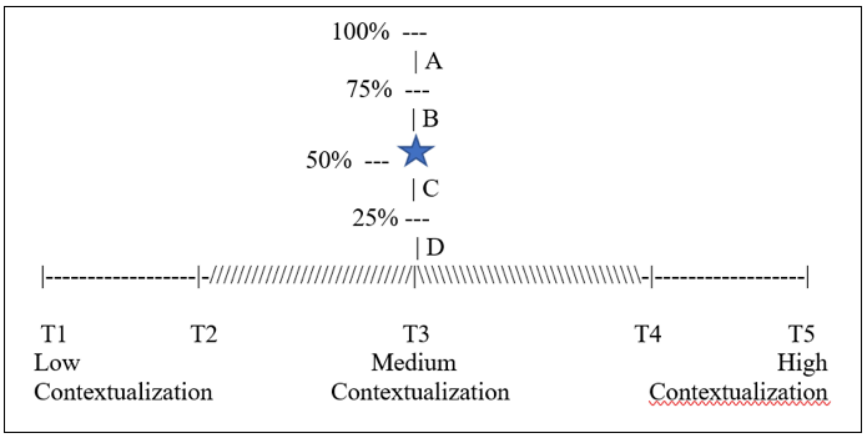

Figure 23. Term with medium contextualization: baptize

Note: ★= *ghbz* (to dip)

Third Term in Rubric: Law

There are many instances in translation where the Bible and the Qur'an use the same word. This challenge leaves the translator in a difficult position of not knowing how the listeners will understand the text. This rubric can help discover how well the terms are understood and if alterations are necessary.

Term with Low and High Contextualization: Law

One of the ways to translate الشريعة (*as-sharia)* is *law*. The word is used at times in the Bible, the Qur'an, and the Hadith with that meaning. In the Bible, the term refers to the commandments God gave to the children of Israel after leaving Egypt. Additionally, the word refers to the first five books of the Bible, also known as the Torah or Pentateuch. In the Qur'an and the Hadith, *as-sharia* refers to Islamic law with other possible meanings as well. The word in a Berberized form is, شّرع (*shra3*). We tested this word with more participants, nearly thirty. I present the back translation of the Tamazight text in Romans 7:14 in order to listen to the text as a Berber speaker would hear. The verse reads, "Because we know that *the law* came from God but I am a weak human that

was sold like a slave to sin." All of the hearers recognized the word *as-sharia* as referring to the Islamic law, not the commandments given to Moses nor the five books of the law. The Christian listeners felt the word could also mean the Old Testament law.

As one sees the word in the rubric, it appears as both a low and high contextualized term. However, due to the heavy Islamic influence, the meaning shifts to the T5 end of the spectrum. The term is not understood with a biblical meaning, and thus received a D grade.

Figure 24 below illustrates a common example of identical words used on both ends of the spectrum. Unfortunately, many Bible translators continue to use the words despite the heavy Islamic influence and understanding. Words such as *sin*, *holy*, *grace*, *righteous,* and *Holy Spirit* are very similar in Tamazight to Arabic in their form. The terms carry significant Islamic meanings and will often result in translation where the meaning shifts to T5, as seen above. Listeners have a difficult challenge in overcoming this Muslim context in their minds. Similarly, the inference leads them back to what they know most readily—Islam. Thus, adjustments must be made to these words, using explicative phrases or qualifiers.

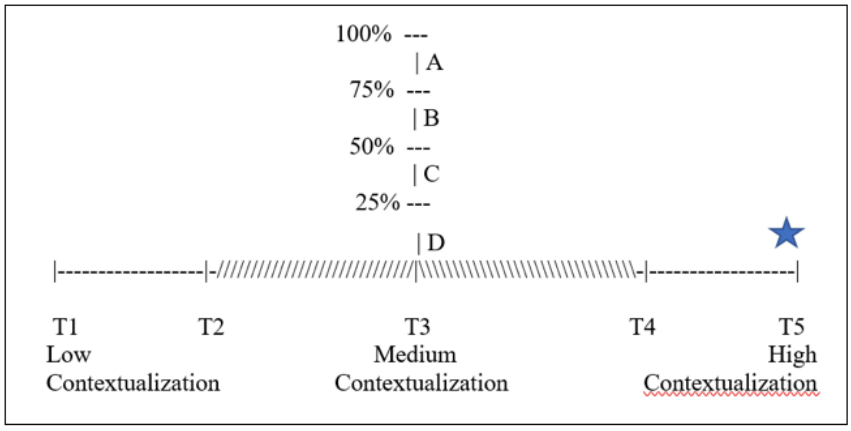

Figure 24. Term with low and high contextualization: law

Note: ★ = *Shra3* (law)

Term with Medium Contextualization:
Law

The team struggled to find a word that could mean a biblically religious law until a member suggested adding a qualifier to the phrase. The new term became *shra3 n Musa* (the law of Moses). We read the same verse from Romans with a substitution. The text reads, "Because we know that the *law of Moses* came from God but I am a weak human that was sold like a slave to sin." The listeners understood the phrase to mean "the law given to Moses as the Ten Commandments" at a much higher percentage (66 percent). Few, if any, realized that there were many more laws given. Similarly, only about 10 percent of those tested recognized that the *law of Moses* also could mean the Torah or the first five books of the Bible. It is very likely that the understanding from these few individuals came from previous knowledge and not from the new phrase. However, most importantly, we asked if this was the same law from the Qur'an. More than twenty of the thirty (70 percent) stated this was a different law, a special law for Moses. Approximately 8 to 10 (30 percent) of the listeners thought these laws were the same. Thus, this was a significant improvement from the previous term. Using a medium contextualization approach, the team saw this new phrase move from a D grade to a B.

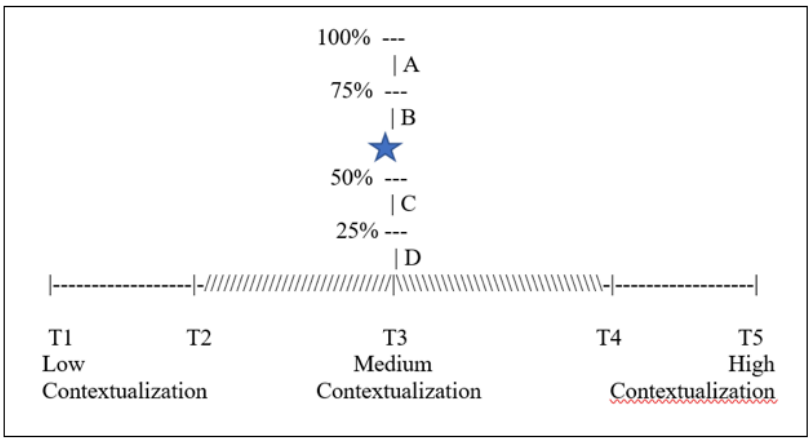

Figure 25. Term with medium contextualization: law

Note: ★ = *Shra3 n Musa* (law of Moses)

An Exception

While the previous illustration demonstrates shared words moving to a T5 understanding, occasionally, a word works in all categories. An example of such an exception is the word for *faith*, ليمان (*Liman*). This word comes from the Arabic word for faith, الْإِيمَانِ (*al-iman*), and is used in both Arabic Bibles and in the Qur'an. When tested, the word means the belief in a higher power, such as God. The team asked if this word applies only to Muslims. Universally, the reply was negative. Anyone can have faith in God, and Jews and Christians have faith in their respective God. Thus, the term works well in all categories and serves the Tamazight translation project as a highly appropriate key biblical term, receiving an A.

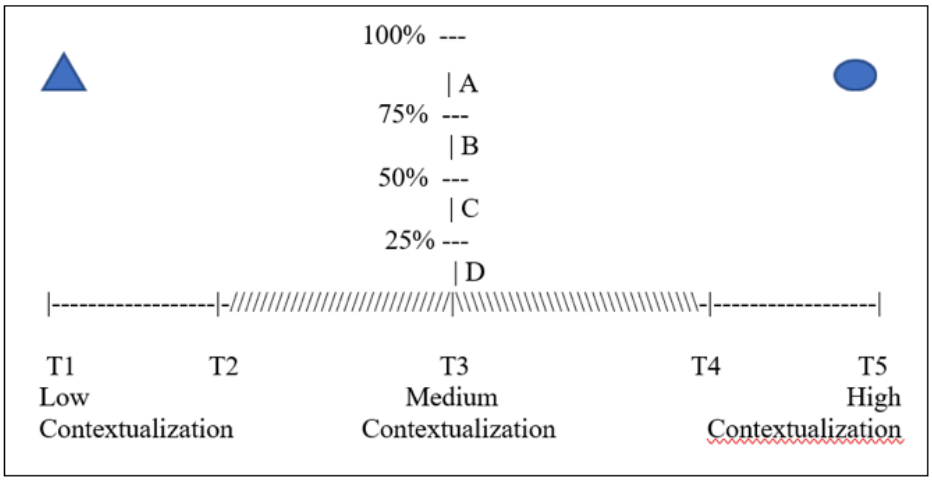

Figure 26. Term suitable in all categories: faith

Note: ▲ = *al imane* (faith; with a Christian understanding)
● = *al imane* (faith; with a Muslim understanding)

Difficult Terms: Son of God, God the Father

Several key biblical terms prove challenging for Muslims to accept or believe. However, these words or phrases are crucial to the core of a Christian's faith, and the Tamazight translation team feels they cannot alter them. The terms *Son of God*, *God the*

Father, and *Son of Man* are three such terms, referred to as *Divine Familial Terms*. Our team agreed unanimously to use these terms and translate them using a T1 approach. Additionally, the Wycliffe Bible Translator consultant working with the project also notified us that if we removed these terms, he would not approve the translation. Therefore, no controversy existed over this usage.

When tested, the terms caused enormous confusion, especially the term *Son of God*, ممّيس ن – ربّي (*mimis n rabi*). The listeners could give no clear definition for this term. The Muslim audience sometimes even refused to repeat the phrases, and it only led to strong disagreements and quotations from the Qur'an. They stated that these phrases indicate sexual activity between God and Mary, which they reject. Although many disagreed with the term *God the Father*, they did recognize that, in many Muslims' opinions, Christians falsely believe this idea.

The Christian testers completely agreed with the phrase, *Son of God*, but could not define the term. There was no mention of impurity between God and Mary. Admittedly, these terms are exceptionally challenging. Nevertheless, the team has chosen to translate them in a T1 approach, as alternatives remove the familial relationship presented in the Scriptures.[4] Furthermore, they felt that limiting the Bible to only qur'anic terms does not permit seekers or Christians to understand God in his fullness. The team believes these phrases will continue to be misinterpreted and require deep discipleship for the biblical truth to be comprehended. With misconceptions from Muslim listeners and the inability to define the terms by Christian testers, the grades for these terms currently receive a D.

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[4] Rick Brown, John Penny, and Leith Gray offer alternative suggestions for Son of God. They recommend, "God's Beloved Christ" or "God's Intimate Beloved Chosen One." As noted above, although these phrases are true, they remove the familial relationship which is taught in the Bible. For further reading see Rick Brown, John Penny, and Leith Gray, "Muslim-Idiom Bible Translations: Claims and Facts," *St. Francis Magazine* 5, no. 6 (December 2009): 87–105.

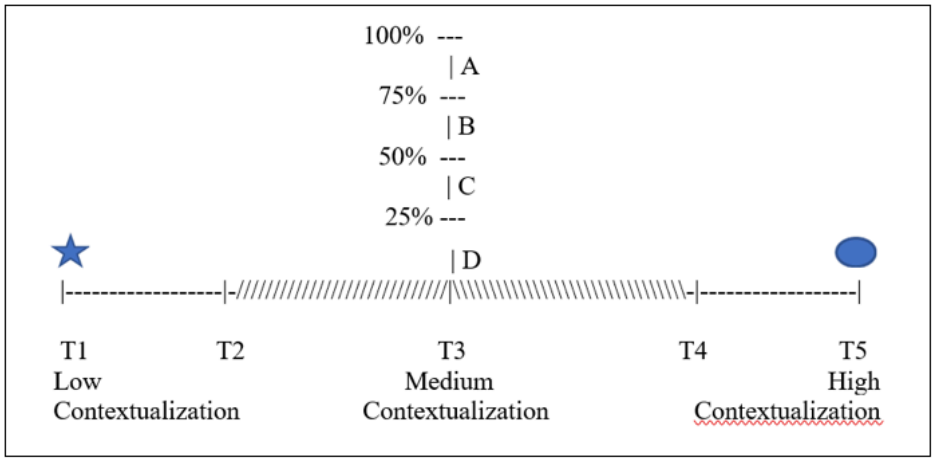

Figure 27. Term with low contextualization: Son of God

Note: ★ = *mimis n Rabi* (Son of God; with a Christian understanding)
● = *mimis n Rabi* (Son of God; with a Muslim understanding)

Gathering of Data for Placement on Spectrum

As more key biblical terms appear on a spectrum, the visual reality of the continuum becomes apparent. For example, the Tamazight Bible translation project identified 56 terms to test. After using the rubric, the team determines the following results:

- T1 terms: 10 (7 with C grades; 3 with D grades)
- T3 terms: 34 (11 with A grades; 21 with B grades; 2 with C grades)
- T4 terms: 1 (1 with A grade)
- T5 terms: 12 (2 with A grades; 3 with B grades; 4 with C grades; 3 with D grades)

- Note: A T2 term would take a T1 example and attempt to add a modifier for clarity; a T4 term would take a T5 example and attempt to add a modifier for clarity.

The team fills in the chart and notices where the clustering occurs.

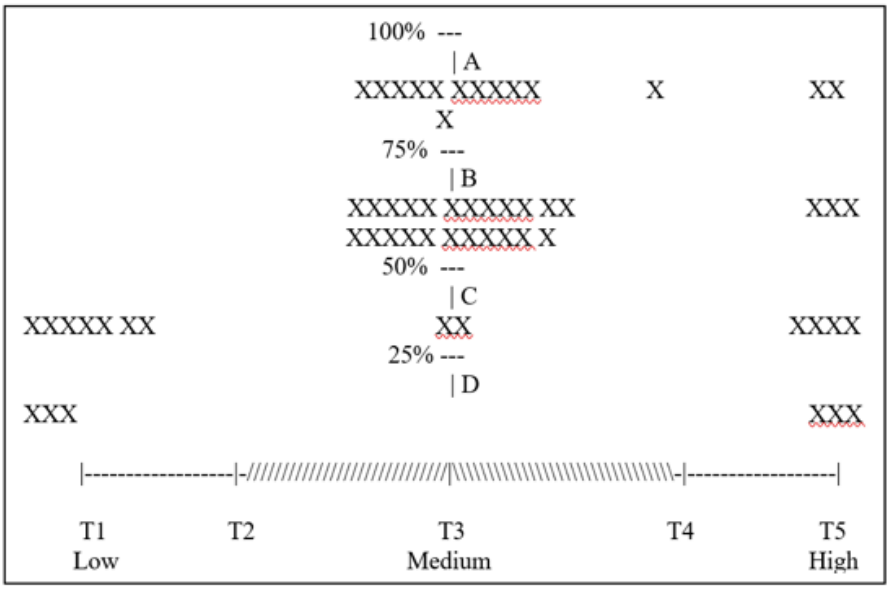

Figure 28. Example of testing data of key terms in Tamazight

Note: Each X represents a key biblical term.

Thus, in the chart, the team notices that of the 56 terms, 10 terms are T1; 34 terms are T3; 12 terms are T5.

Therefore, as figure 28 demonstrates, the team has done well in shifting the terms to contextualized forms in the T3 range, bringing about higher levels of comprehension. This modification in terminology is extremely time consuming and involves much discussion. The team often brainstormed a single word and tested it for months with different individuals.[5] The bell curve demonstrates the highest level of entries and understanding in the T3 area.

[5] A cell phone proved a most helpful tool in the testing process. When the team faced roadblocks, a member would call an aunt or grandmother as we sat together. These individuals were completely removed from the project and offered a fresh perspective. Sometimes they could offer no new ideas. At other times, they helped the team discover a new term. The calls would then continue, asking other family members if they understood either the former term or the newer one.

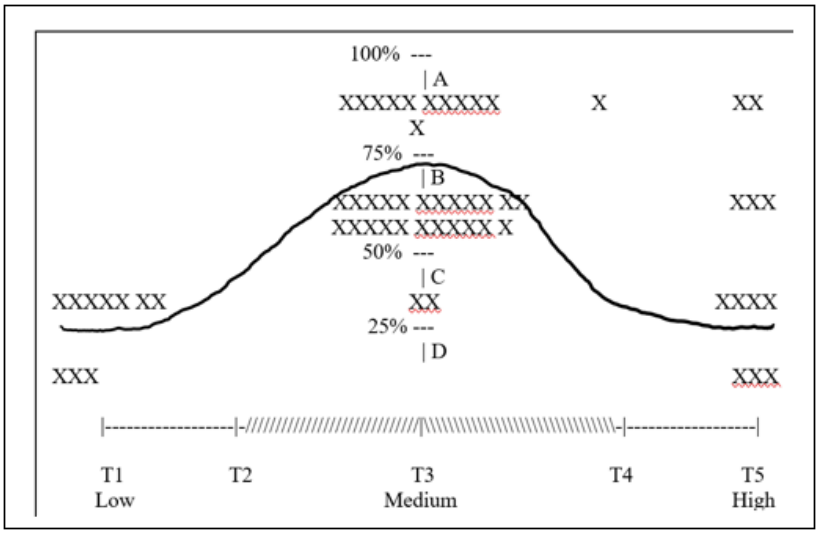

Figure 29. Bell curve of mediating approach

Interestingly, several terms have carried over from Islam that carry average or above average understanding, such as the terms for *Jerusalem* and *demon*. The team can identify terms that still need more research which fall in the C and especially D range. Fortunately, the team has identified replacements for several words in the D range, such as *temple* and *Holy Spirit*. Further research and testing is needed with terms such as *church*, *sin*, *holy*, *Gospel*, *will of God*, and *grace*.

Recognitions

I recognize that this rubric does not present a perfect solution for key biblical terms. No one word or phrase will perfectly replace terms with lower scores, and many words carry a wide semantic range and will still require thoughtful terms such as *logos*. Furthermore, not every key biblical term should be translated in the same way in every instance. However, this rubric may offer more helpful options than previous tools, especially for those working in minority languages under Islamic hegemony.

I recognize that the rubric will not always be objective, yet it can be comparable to placing churches on a C1–C5 spectrum. Just as the shift between a C3 and

C4 church may be minute, the difference in terms from a T3 to a T4 translation may be difficult to distinguish. Similarly, Bible translation spectrums are often subjective as translation committees may decide where their version should appear on the continuum. Additionally, within each category on the T1–T5 spectrum, there exists a range.

More than just key biblical terms determines the placement on the T1–T5 scale. Nevertheless, these vital components play an essential role in understanding the meaning of the text. The rubric could be used outside of key biblical terms to determine if a higher or lower academic register was necessary. If a synonym such as *stop* can replace the word *halt* and achieve far greater understanding, this tool may help beyond its original meaning.

Controversy

The discussion about Divine Familial Terms is not unique to the Tamazight project, nor is it new. In August 2011, SIL hosted a consultation in Istanbul to address this issue. The conference title was "SIL International Statement of Best Practices for the Translation of Divine Familial Terms." The document released after the consultation states, "The purpose of the Istanbul Statement is to present a set of guidelines or best practices to ensure that the 'divine familial' components of meaning are communicated well in the translated text itself, not just in the paratext."[6] The text further notes,

> One of the most significant developments of the Istanbul Consultation was the determination that *the phrase Son of God must be translated with phrases that have familial meaning*. The discussion of translation alternatives, leading up to and including the Consultation as stated above, had focused primarily on whether terms like Messiah or Word of God were viable alternatives for Son of God. One of the main outcomes from Istanbul is that neither Messiah nor Word of God adequately convey the necessary relational components of meaning.[7]

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[6] Wycliffe Bible Translators, "SIL International Statement of Best Practices for Bible Translation of Divine Familial Terms," *Asian and Journal of Pentecostal Studies* (January 1, 2012): 148, https://www.academia.edu/61821621/Wycliffe_Bible_Translators_SIL_International_Statement_of_Best_Practices_for_Bible_Translation_of_Divine_Familial_Terms_pp_147_166_.

[7] Wycliffe, "Best Practices for Translation of Divine Familial Terms," 153.

Notably, if the consultation transpired in 2011, the debate had begun many years previously. Although SIL published this document in 2012, the principles within apparently have not been followed by all translators among Muslims PGs over this past decade. In August 2022, the *Journal of Biblical Missiology* released an article noting the 10-year observance of the Istanbul Consultation.[8] The editor aimed to examine if translators have moved on the contextualization spectrum since the conference in Turkey. Some translators have eluded the Istanbul statement by producing "Scripture-Based Product." Since these works are not "the Bible," much liberty has been taken. This freedom includes removing terms such as *Son of God* or *God the Father*. Other translators have used "weakening modifiers," such as calling Jesus the "*spiritual Son*." If these claims are valid, they risk leading Muslims interested in the Bible back to Islam. A seeker could determine that there is nothing new in Christianity and recognize the two religions as identical. This challenge reaffirms my belief that a mediating approach offers the best chance for indigenous Islamic PGs to understand the Bible.

In more than twenty years as a Bible translator, I have not observed any of the disagreement of Divine Familial Terms in my work in North Africa. WBT and SIL have consistently sought to produce the finest Bible available. As mentioned, consultants always verified our text, checking for Divine Familial Terms and their accuracy. Thus, missionaries with specific agendas may exist in any organization but I have found the opposite with these two translation groups. They exist of fine men and women who seek to honor the Word of God among all peoples.

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[8] This article explains several loopholes in the Istanbul statement. For further reading see Mike Tisdell, ed., "'Son of God' Unresolved: Ten Years after a Landmark Petition, Translators Continue to Remove 'Son of God' and Insert Islamic Teaching into New Translations," *Journal of Biblical Missiology* (blog), August 1, 2022, https://biblicalmissiology.org/blog/2022/08/01/son-of-god-muslim-idiom-translations/.

Conclusion

This brief testing of the rubric indicates that a meditating approach to translation among indigenous Islamic PGs can lead to a better understanding. Texts that lean too far to one side or the other of the spectrum can lead to profound confusion. The Bible is a complex book. If doctrines are challenging within, let translators not be guilty of adding to the difficulties by using language laden with complications. When both sides of the spectrum indicate that the exact phrase is acceptable, testing may indicate that the words still carry a heavy Islamic meaning. In these cases, words may need qualifiers that further clarify the meaning. Some phrases (e.g., Divine Familial Terms) are very controversial and challenging to translate. Even with these obstacles, the terms should be translated in a T1 approach as they are core to the Christian faith.

Additionally, this rubric helps identify words that still need further testing. Discipleship is an ongoing process in the Christian faith and may cause words receiving poor scores in the 2020s to be well understood and accepted in the 2040s. Thus, the letter grades may change as Christianity deepens among Tamazight-speaking people. Future translators can benefit from this tool and focus their attention on key biblical terms with lower grades. May their works bring about many translations which lead Tamazight speakers to become a mighty church, flourishing and themselves sending missionaries to the ends of the earth.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that translators among indigenous non-Arabic-speaking, Islamic peoples should translate the first edition of the Bible into their language using a mediating approach. Upon review, my methodology confirms that neither an essentially literal nor a highly paraphrastic translation are optimal targets for work among these PGs. Instead, my research demonstrates that a mediating approach will continue to be the most understandable translation for the Berbers of North Africa.

Methodology

Since the eighth century AD, the Berbers have been under Islamic hegemony dominating every aspect of their culture, including their language (Tamazight). Today, Moroccan society immensely respects both qur'anic Arabic and Modern Standard Arabic. Unfortunately, the Tamazight language finds itself at the bottom of the language hierarchy in Morocco. Religious vocabulary often follows the terms found in the Qur'an, and as words transfer over into Tamazight, the Islamic meaning transmits as well. Additionally, the Berbers do not have a recent Christian heritage upon which they have built a church or believing community. Any key biblical terms translators seek to use will nearly always carry an Islamic meaning, even if using an essentially literal translation. If the translation team uses words unique to Christianity, they often carry no meaning for non-Christian hearers. Thus, using key biblical terms with a mediating approach offers the best opportunity for Berbers to hear *and understand* the Bible in their mother tongue.

In addition, individuals and teams have translated the Bible into English over the past eight centuries. Universally, their goal was to produce a text that allowed the

reader and the hearer to understand God's intended message. Often, translation projects began because the church felt that older Bibles could no longer deliver that vital message. Those doing this work admitted the challenge of balancing the text between the form and the meaning. Between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, most Bibles in English leaned towards formal equivalence, also known as essentially literal translations. The texts allowed the reader to see and analyze Hebrew and Greek syntax and grammar, prioritizing the original languages. These Bibles were understood best when preachers and teachers could expound on the meaning of the text. Additionally, essentially literal texts often required books that could explain the meanings of words, such as commentaries or language helps. However, today, without such resources in their mother tongue, the Berbers struggle with this type of translation. Even the handful of pastors among this PG find themselves challenged to understand this type of Bible, and they can offer little help to their people with an essentially literal translation.

In the twentieth century, Eugene Nida promoted translating the Scriptures using a method known as Dynamic Equivalence, which eventually came to be called Functional Equivalence. Many translations over the past sixty years have focused on this thought-for-thought method. Functional Equivalence translation aims to pass on the meaning of the Bible rather than the strict form. These texts offer great freedom to express the author's intention to the reader. However, if translation teams take Functional Equivalence to the extreme, these works can stretch the truth or change the historicity of the Bible. This type of Scripture can lead the reader away from Christ and back to Muslim theology when employing Islamic vocabulary.

The Tamazight translation project has sought to balance the form and meaning as they have no resources in their language to help explain difficult words or passages. Additionally, the team's goal was always to pair the Bible with solid discipleship. Unfortunately, among the Berbers, many believers can only listen to the Bible online, and have no one to ask what it means as they find themselves far from one another. Thus, the

mediating approach again seems the most prudent method until the church can stand alone with steadfast leadership and reach the many scattered believers.

Another point of consideration is that many Bible translation spectrums have been produced with the vast number of versions of the English Bible available. Typically, on one extreme, there exists a translation that gives priority to the syntax and grammar of the source language. These essentially literal Bibles focus on the form and require previous knowledge or much explanation. Conversely, functionally equivalent translations focus on the receptor language and the original text's meaning. If given too much license, these texts may distort the original method to function well in the language or even to appease the reader. For a first translation among the Berbers, neither of these Bibles is recommended as they require previous knowledge or resources which are unavailable.

Furthermore, as missionaries traveled to people around the world, they faced a spectrum of possibilities. Some forced their own culture, language, and ideas upon the new community where they lived. However, vast misunderstandings often occurred, leaving both parties extremely frustrated. On the other hand, missionaries risked voyaging to distant lands and accepting everything about the new culture, syncretizing the Bible with false teachings. These workers might have been tempted to alter the message of the Word in order to find higher receptivity. Ultimately, one finds balance in these two extremes by contextualizing the methods while leaving the same eternal message. This challenge parallels Bible translation among indigenous Islamic PGs. A text that avoids these outer boundaries allows the authorial intention to remain while speaking in a clear, accurate, and natural language.

Advocates of Relevance Theory teach how individuals seek to communicate in ways that are optimally relevant to the hearer. Additionally, the goal is to require the least amount of processing cost by the receiver. However, this type of communication will not always result in direct speech but will contain many inferences from prior knowledge.

Bible translators among the Berbers do well to pay attention to this vital message. These PGs have no Christian heritage and filter their ideas and decision-making processes through Islam. Thus, the assumption that a direct translation of the Bible will lead the hearer to belief and a strong church is often unfounded. Instead, an unclear Bible reifies Islamic beliefs while Christian doctrines become syncretized with Muslim theology. A first translation must make explicit what the original audience would have understood. This mediating approach gives indigenous peoples the best hope of understanding the gospel message.

John Travis offers the C1–C6 chart he used among indigenous Islamic people, allowing missionaries to evaluate contextualization patterns among those with whom they minister. A C1 model brings in a foreign culture that dominates the church in language, culture, and liturgy. Conversely, a C5 strategy looks and sounds exactly like the local culture. The goal is to give believers opportunities to share what they have found. Travis advocates for a C5 movement, which leaves the believer in the mosque, an insider among his own people. Opponents warn of the many dangers of this model and suggest a C3 or C4 approach instead. This spectrum mimics many of the same ideas found in Bible translation. Texts made to sound too much like the original cause great confusion and misunderstandings. Translations that mimic the local Islamic culture and practices lead to syncretism. The mediating approach offers the best chance for a hearer with no Christian heritage to understand.

Regarding translation work, the UBSGNT presents a grading of variants from A–D, allowing the reader to assess the confidence level of the editorial committee. Over time, the grading scale has changed as the United Bible Society produced multiple editions; however, the reason for this shift remains unclear. Bible translators must test their work with native speakers and allow them to evaluate whether texts are well comprehended or not. Nevertheless, a grading scale that employs native speakers can be a valuable tool for Bible translators.

My methodology combined Travis's C1–C6 chart with the UBSGNT grading of variants, creating a T1–T5 spectrum. A T1 approach prioritizes the source language's form and syntax. A T5 translation focuses on the meaning while prioritizing the grammar of the receptor language. However, on both extremes of this T1–T5 spectrum, a danger exists for profound misunderstandings. I hope with this rubric to visualize where key biblical terms cluster on the spectrum, allowing translators to see several important data points. First, the team can picture if they accomplished their goal in the type of translation that they sought to produce. Second, current translators can focus on words that receive low grades. Finally, when subsequent teams seek to produce other translations, duplication can be avoided, and testing can prioritize these low-graded key biblical terms.

Research Question

At the beginning of my research, I asked the following question. How can Bible translators better communicate key terms to indigenous, non-Arabic speaking peoples highly influenced by Islam? This dissertation emphasizes that a first translation falling near T3 communicates the original authors intended meaning in the clearest, most accurate, and most natural way possible. All of my research has highlighted this point. I feel more strongly now than at the beginning of this journey that this approach offers the best opportunity for the Berbers of North Africa to hear and respond to the message of the Bible.

A famous adage notes, "All roads lead to Rome." Within Islam, all roads lead to Mecca. Many Berbers filter their thoughts and decision-making processes through a Muslim worldview. A T1 approach leaves the reader with little meaning, causing them to return to what they do know—Islam. A T5 translation sounds like what they already understand, and Christian beliefs are rejected or blended with Islamic doctrines.

Therefore, the answer to my question is to use a text closer to a T3 translation as the first Bible among indigenous Islamic, non-Arabic speakers.

Thesis

In this dissertation I argued that translators among indigenous, non-Arabic speaking, Islamic peoples should translate their first Bible into their language using a mediating approach. I created a rubric that assists translators in determining where their translation falls on a spectrum. This tool allows translators to abstain from using language that may be technically consistent with the original language yet communicates zero meaning, little meaning, or the wrong meaning. This helps avoid a Bible translation that overuses Islamic idioms, which can lead to profound misunderstandings.

After I first established why a mediating approach will best serve the Berber community of North Africa, I created a Bible translation rubric that can assist translators in seeking to achieve this goal. This tool does not provide a solution for all translation challenges. Instead, the translation team works with native speakers to achieve a text with acceptable contextualization which will bless this PG for generations to come.

Strengths and Weaknesses

This dissertation has sought to bring together many points of research which reflect continuums beyond Bible translation. Contextualization models by Hesselgrave, Rommen, Kraft, and Travis demonstrate similar challenges. On the far ends of these contextualization spectrums, one tends to either conform to a foreign culture or syncretize with the local beliefs. Additionally, Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory, as seen through the work of Gutt, allows translators to understand the importance of implicature in their work. When PGs without a Christian background hear key biblical terms, their inference will transfer thoughts to what they already know, Islam. These research models all point to the same idea of a mediating approach to best communicate the intended message.

A challenge in the entire process has been the limits to testing the text. Distrust abounds among many Berbers, and national laws give little protection to those who leave Islam. Thus, one is forced to use a small number of testers and often on a repeated basis. The idea of checking a text with first-time hearers is highly implausible. This reality makes it challenging to know what listeners understand when they hear key biblical terms (e.g., sin, grace, or holiness). One hopes that the winds of change are blowing and that a bright future is ahead. Unfortunately, for many Bible translation projects, testing texts will continue to be difficult and must be done under similar constraints.

Further Research

I am uncertain if the type of language hegemony which exists in Morocco takes place in other countries. Proximity to the Middle East may change the way minority languages under Islam need to address key biblical terms. Furthermore, it may be possible that similar challenges exist with different religious veneers, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, or Catholicism. A translation among Pure Land Buddhists may find words such as grace very easy to translate. On the other hand, when Jesus offers eternal life in John 3:16, the translator among Hindus must test and clarify that the term extends a Christian hope, not a Hindu curse. This challenge is conceivable, as well, in lands where Catholicism is preeminent and key biblical terms are used among the masses yet understood in an entirely different manner. Thus, further research should continue outside of indigenous Islamic peoples in order to see how key biblical terms fall in a contextualization spectrum.

The hope of this research was and still is to see Bible translation among indigenous Islamic people which is clear, accurate, and natural. Texts with a balanced approach will prayerfully build a strong church, out of which more translations will be produced. Having multiple copies of God's Word will allow them to reach their own people and beyond. Additionally, as the church grows, Berber theologians can write

commentaries and word studies that deepen their knowledge and understanding. Christian songs will enrich the deep meanings of key biblical terms in ways that words alone cannot. The Holy Spirit, our greatest teacher, will continue to reveal truths of the Scriptures as believers seek the Lord with all their hearts. May this work grow among the Berbers of North Africa and continue for the glory of God. Amen.

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ABSTRACT

THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE AMONG INDIGENOUS, ISLAMIC PEOPLES USING A MEDIATING APPROACH

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Bible translators among indigenous, Islamic people groups face difficult decisions when translating key biblical terms. Translators may use a word-for-word approach which can leave the reader with little meaning or the wrong meaning. Others attempt to use Islamic idioms which can blur the meaning or reinforce Islamic beliefs. A corresponding analogy can be observed in Bible translation spectrums which demonstrate formal equivalence on one side and functional equivalence on the other. For first-time translation work among these indigenous, Islamic people groups, I suggest using a mediating approach.

In chapter 1 of this dissertation, I begin by examining the country where I have lived many years, and evaluate the amount of Christian influence present today. I also briefly analyze a unique language hierarchy that heavily influences the translation process. Translation teams evaluate this information so they can better understand the audience for whom they are translating. Chapter 2 presents a brief history of English Bible translations and how the translators balanced between form and meaning. I examine Bible translation spectrums and the theories behind essentially literal, highly paraphrastic, and mediating translations.

Chapter 3 considers two essential concepts which affect the entire translation process. The first idea is the importance of a balanced contextualization approach in

translation. In David Hesselgrave's work, he outlines crucial aspects of contextualization which influence Bible translation. The second concept looks at Ernst-August Gutt's work on relevance theory and the implications for Bible translators. Chapter 4 presents a new rubric that combines John Travis's CP model and the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament grade-scale for variants. This rubric allows translators among indigenous, Islamic people to test their key biblical terms more objectively to determine where their translation falls on a Bible translation spectrum. Chapter 5 utilizes several indigenous words in the rubric in order to demonstrate how one may visualize key biblical terms and the benefits of a mediation approach. Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation.

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