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METATEXTS AND THE REGULATION OF READER RESPONSES IN THE TRANSLATION OF SACRED TEXTS*

Abstract

Translators defend themselves and their translations by utilising metatexts, which narrate the nature of the specific translation. This paper will argue that metatexts serve to reframe aspects of religious conflict, and hence they participate in the construction of social reality and identity. The hypothesis to be investigated in this paper is that the metatext of a sacred text regulates the reader's mental preparation for free translation to ensure that free interpretations will be as orthodox as possible. The hypothesis of this paper will be justified by detailed analyses of the following metatexts pertaining to the translation of sacred texts: (1) Martin Luther's *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (Circular Letter on Translation) defending his translation of Romans 3:28 into German; (2) the Aristeas Book as a metatext of the Septuagint, serving as a mediation tool between the Greek and the Hebrew so that the Greek translation attained the religious status of the original Hebrew; (3) the metatexts of the King James Version of 1611 and their roles in mediating religious conflict between Anglicans and Puritans; and (4) metatexts of the next *Afrikaans Bible* translation, a project which is currently under way, as a means to mediate between interpretations of the source text that relate to the Jewish context of the source text as opposed to later Christian interpretations of the text.

* It is a pleasure to dedicate this essay to Professor Andrzej Zaborski whom I first met in person when he invited me to Poland on behalf of the Committee of Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences to lecture in Poland from 13-22 May 2005. Lectures were read at a meeting of the Academy in Cracow as well as at the Second Cracow Conference on Oriental Languages in Translation. Guest lectures were read at tertiary institutions in Poznan and twice in Warsaw. We discovered that although we live in very different places, we share common interests and goals. I am honoured to consider him a friend.

1. Introduction

Translators defend themselves and their translations by utilising metatexts which describe the translation of the sacred text and narrate the nature of the specific translation (for example Jerome's Letter to Pammachius). In this paper it will be argued that the metatext of a sacred text regulates the reader's mental preparation for free translation to ensure that free interpretations will be orthodox and that it serves as mediator for religious conflict in the translation of sacred texts. This hypothesis will be justified by Luther's *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (Circular Letter on Translation) of 1530, which serves as metatext for the Luther Bible translation and in which he defended his translation; the Aristeas Book which serves as a metatext for the Septuagint (LXX) to reframe aspects of religious conflict; and the metatexts created for the next *Afrikaans Bible* translation concerning the dispute about using capital letters to translate so-called messianic names or epithets in the Old Testament.

In the next section Baker's model (2006) is related to the role of metatexts. It is followed by a section on the dimensions (or frames) of the translation of sacred texts and then a discussion of the three historical cases of metatexts.

2. Frames and framing

Baker's (2006a; 2006b) narrative model relies principally on the notion of narrative as understood in some strands of social and communication theory, rather than in narratology or linguistics. Here, "narrative" is used interchangeably with "story": narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world(s) in which we live, and it is our belief in these stories that guides our actions in the real world.

The strengths of narrative theory are as follows. Firstly, narrative theory acknowledges the ongoing, negotiable nature of our positioning in relation to social reality. It thus allows us to move beyond focusing on supposedly inherent differences, such as gender (Goddard 1990; Simon 1996; Von Flotow 1997), sexuality (Harvey 1998, 2003), or cultural patterns of behaviour (for example, Katan 2004). Secondly, narrative theory allows us to see social actors, including translators, as separate persons. Thirdly, narrative theory allows us to explain behaviour in dynamic rather than static terms. Fourthly, narrative theory recognises the power of social structures, but does not preclude active resistance on a personal or group level. And finally, narrative theory can be applied to translation to explain translational choices in relation to wider social and political contexts, without losing sight of the individual text and event.

Narratives are not undifferentiated lists of happenings: they are stories that are temporally and causally constituted in such a way as to allow us to make moral decisions in the real world. Somers and Gibson (1994) suggest that narratives are constituted through four interdependent features. The first

feature, temporality, means that narratives are embedded in time and space, and derive much of their meaning from the temporal moment and physical site of the narration. Relationality, the second feature, means that it is impossible for the human mind to make sense of isolated events or of a patchwork of events. The third core feature is selective appropriation as realised in patterns of omission and addition which are designed to suppress, accentuate or elaborate particular aspects of a narrative. The final and most important core feature of narrativity is causal emplotment. When independent propositions are placed within a plot structure, they are transformed into an intelligible sequence about which we can form an opinion; emplotment thus charges the events that are depicted with moral and ethical significance.

The process of framing events involves setting up structures of anticipation that guide others' interpretation of events, usually as a direct challenge to dominant interpretations of the same events. This discursive work of framing events for a particular set of addressees is important because it undermines the dominant narrative. Every choice in translation acts as a kind of index that activates a narrative, a story of what the world or some aspect of the world is like. The point, then, is not to treat any specific translational choice as random, with no implications in the real world. Instead, the framework of narrative theory encourages us to think of individual choices as embedded in, and contributing to, the elaboration of concrete social reality (Baker 2006b).

According to Baker (2006b), processes of (re)framing can draw on practically any linguistic or non-linguistic resource to set up an interpretive context for the reader or hearer. In modern translations, these may include exploiting meta- or paralinguistic devices such as intonation and typography, visual resources such as colour, image and layout, and of course linguistic devices such as tense shifts, deixis, code switching, and the use of euphemisms. In addition to revealing the historically shifting relationship between author and translator, metatexts are useful precisely because they trace the contours of literary ideology and expose the socio-cultural context which commands literary exchanges. Even if a metatext may at times result in ritualised discourse, it can also provide an important overview of the ideological context of the translation and the expectations of the readers. The metatext also has the function of calling attention to the translator as co-signer of the work; the metatext thereby calls attention to the intervention of another hand as well as another cultural context in the text.

3. The translation dimensions of sacred texts and metatexts

The discussion of metatexts introduced in the preceding paragraph can be refined to four dimensions which reflect the reality of religious translation, both within individual cultures and over the historical course of whole civilisations (adapted from Robinson 2000:103-107).

Unregulated translation

The translation of sacred texts for personal usage requires very little control and translation is unregulated. Anyone is free to ask for a translation, and anyone capable of making one is free to make it; without any regulation.

Regulation of the act of translation

Regulated translation involves strict controls on who translates, what is translated, how it is translated, for whom it is translated, and whether and with whom the translation is shared and discussed. This dimension entails either forbidding all translation or restricting the translation to a small group of insiders, in one or more of the following ways:

the original (untranslated) texts are kept from the ‘profane’ (outsiders) and are therefore not available for translation;

the texts are protected against discovery, through the use of ciphers or keeping them in ancient scripts;

the texts are ‘translated’ (interpreted) orally, to selected receivers (initiates), by members of the priesthood and only within a ritual space.

Regulation of the comprehensibility of actual translation

The regulation of the comprehensibility of actual translation is typical of this dimension. It results in literal translation, which serves the purpose of keeping the sacred text largely incomprehensible to the masses. It is believed that the sacred text is potentially dangerous to unlearned readers, and that vernacular translation will mean the end of civilisation (Robinson 2000:103-107).

Regulation of the readers’ mental preparation for translation:

The sacrality of sacred texts no longer means that they are dangerous to the unlearned or that they must therefore be kept from the profane. This openness does not mean absolute freedom but seeks to control the reader’s mental preparation for translation so as to ensure that free interpretations will be orthodox. The belief is that the text was originally written for the masses and should not be kept from them (Robinson 2000:103-107).

Metatexts have been used as mediating tools for religious conflict arising from the translation of sacred texts (Naudé 2008). At the time of Jerome’s *Letter to Pammachius*, Jerome was translating the Hebrew into Latin (the Vulgate). Although not principally on translation, the letter provides a lengthy discussion of Biblical translation and forms part of a broader campaign by Jerome. He had become dissatisfied with the Greek Septuagint and Old Latin translations, which he frequently critiqued, and sought to justify his new translation.

4. The ‘Circular Letter on Translation’ as a justification for the Luther Translation

The Roman Catholic Church was preoccupied with the concern that the ‘correct’ established meaning of the Bible be protected. Any translation diverging from the accepted interpretation was likely to be deemed heretical and to be censured or banned. An even worse fate lay in store for some of the translators. The most famous examples are those of the English theologian-translator William Tyndale and the French humanist Etienne Dolet, both burnt at the stake. Tyndale, a formidable linguist who was said to have mastered ten languages, including Hebrew, and whose extraordinary English Bible was later used as the basis for the King James Version, was abducted, tried for heresy and executed in the Netherlands in 1536 (Bobrich 2003). Dolet was condemned by the theological faculty of Sorbonne in 1546, apparently for adding, in his translation of one of Plato’s dialogues, the phrase *rien du tout* (‘nothing at all’) in a passage about what existed after death. The addition led to the charge of blasphemy, the assertion being that Dolet did not believe in immortality. For such a translation ‘error’ he was executed.

But advances in the study and knowledge of the Biblical languages and classical scholarship, typified by Erasmus’s edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516 and the general climate of the Reformation and spurred by the new technology of the printing press, led to a revolution in Bible translation practice which ‘dominated sixteenth-century book production’ in Europe (Bobrick 2003:81). Non-literal or non-accepted translation came to be seen and used as a weapon against the Church. The most notable example is Martin Luther’s crucially influential translation of the Bible into East Central German. Luther played a pivotal role in the Reformation while, linguistically, his use of a regional yet socially broad dialect went a long way to reinforcing that form of the German language as standard (“You must ask the mother at home, the children in the street. The ordinary man in the market and look at their mouths, how they speak, and translate that way; then they’ll understand and see that you’re speaking to them in German”). Luther follows St Jerome in rejecting a word-for-word translation strategy since it would be unable to convey the same meaning as the source text and would sometimes be incomprehensible (Munday 2012 :38). An example he gives is from Matthew 12:34:

Ex abundantia cordis os loquitur.

Word-for word: Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (KJV)

Luther: Wes das Herz voll ist, des geht der mund über (common German proverb)

The idiom means ‘to speak straight from the heart’.

In the case of Martin Luther, he was accused of altering the Holy Scriptures in his translations, especially in his addition of the word *allein* (alone/only) in the translation of Paul's words in Romans 3:28, because there was no equivalent Latin word (e.g. *sola*) in the Latin Vulgate, the religious text used by the Catholic Church (Munday 2012 :38):

Arbitramus hominem iustificari ex fide absque operibus

Wir halten, dass der Mensch gerecht werde ohne des Gesetzes Werke, allein durch den Glauben.

We hold that man is justified without the work of the law, only through faith.

The charge was that the German implied that the individual's belief was sufficient for a good life, making 'the work of the law' (i.e. religious law) redundant. He defended himself in his famous *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (Circular Letter on Translation) which dates from 1530, that is, between the publication of Luther's translation of the New Testament in 1522 and that of the Old Testament in 1534. He justified his translation as necessary for clarity in German: he was translating from the original Greek text and not other translations (i.e. the Latin) into pure, clear German, where *allein* would be used for emphasis. Luther's circular letter included a wealth of other information concerning the task of translation to justify his translation. He discussed the essential traits of the ideal translator, including the translator's qualifications, background knowledge, diligence, sensitivity, intelligence, a wide vocabulary, and patience. He described the nit-picking criticism and ingratitude faced by translators. He described the personal, subjective nature of translations and the impossibility of literal translation. He emphasized the importance of translations sounding like originals with natural speech rhythms and the necessity of translating idioms and sensitivity to the various connotations of different words in different languages and cultures. He acknowledged the necessity of sometimes comprising style for meaning and advocated for the importance of meaning in context, that is, the correct interpretation. In other words, Luther was a sophisticated and reflective translator, who promoted the acceptance of his translation by addressing not only the most serious theological criticism raised against it, but also by describing the nature of translation and the translation process with sensitivity and insight.

In the following section, I will argue that the Aristeas letter fulfilled a similar function as a metatext (see Naudé 2009). Obviously it was not written as a piece of historical research into understanding what had taken place more than a century earlier with respect to the translation of the Hebrew Torah into Greek, but rather to meet some religious crisis at the time of its composition. Since our knowledge of the Jewish communities during the second century BC is meager, scholars are left largely to the internal evidence of the Book itself to (re)frame the Septuagint as translation.

5. (Re)framing the Septuagint through the Aristeas Book

Aristeas' story is presented in the guise of a letter to his brother Philocrates in which he details the purpose and outcome of a delegation sent by Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 BC) to Eleazar, the High Priest in Jerusalem. Demetrius of Phalerum, the librarian of the royal library in Alexandria, had reported to Philadelphus that, although the library already contained 200 000 volumes, there was no copy of the laws of the Jews (the five books of Moses). The king ordered that a letter be addressed to Eleazar requesting elders, six from each tribe, skilled in translating these books (i.e. the Torah), to be sent to Alexandria in order that a proper translation might be made for the king's library. The high priest complied with this request and sent 72 elders to the Egyptian king. These men had not only acquired for themselves knowledge of Jewish literature, but also had studied that of the Greeks. He also sent along with them precious parchments on which the Pentateuch was inscribed in gold. On their arrival in Alexandria the king entertained them with banquets on seven successive days. Each scholar was asked a question by the king, and their wisdom was demonstrated by their answers. Demetrius took the learned elders to the island of Pharos where they completed their work in 72 days. The translation was then read to the Jews, who not only requested a copy of the entire work but also decided that since it had been translated accurately and in pious fashion, it was but right that it should remain as it was and that no revision of any kind might ever take place.

The Aristeas Book has been the object of a great deal of controversy. Firstly, scholars disagree concerning the historical time frame of the Aristeas Book, with dates ranging from the end of the third century BCE to the second century CE (Cook 2005:441-461). Secondly, according to Cook (2005:441-461; 2008:9-33), there are two schools of thought regarding the genre of the Aristeas Book. One group suggests that its genre has no historical value at all (*Pseudepigraphon*), while the other group defines the genre of the Aristeas Book as *historiography*.

The group of scholars who are of the opinion that it has no historical value at all include John Wevers, Abraham Wasserstein and David Wasserstein. They view the letter as fiction or legend and suggest that it contains apologetic overtones in defence of the translation. Wevers (1985) suggests that there is no good reason to believe that the work had anything to do with Ptolemy Philadelphus, with the island of Pharos, with Jewish translators, that a parent Hebrew text was sent from Jerusalem, or that it was a unified work. However, he accepts that the work was Alexandrian of origin, since on linguistic grounds the Greek vocabulary contains items specifically known to have been current in Egypt. According to Wevers (1985:16-38) the *actual Sitz im Leben* for the Aristeas legend seems to betray the Aristeas Book itself. He notes that surprisingly little is said about the actual translation of the Septuagint.

Wasserstein and Wasserstein (2006; see also Keough 2006) acknowledge that answers to questions of the Septuagint's actual origin must remain unknown until better evidence is made available. They have provided the definitive response to the remaining task, namely to investigate and describe the origins and subsequent developments of the legend around the Septuagint. The legend and the translation are thus clearly separated. Wasserstein and Wasserstein acknowledge that the Aristeas Book has no historical value as a witness to the origins of the Septuagint. They argue that a Greek translation of the Torah existed at the time of its composition, and that there was a desire to cement its authority. The Aristeas Book therefore serves as the basis for all subsequent versions of the legend, even when they diverge widely from it.

Other scholars such as Nina Collins, Sylvie Honigman and Noah Hacham, take the historical situation implied by the author seriously. The main argument of this viewpoint is that the metatext represents truth as it should be perceived by the intended readers of the translated sacred text.

Sylvie Honigman (2003:33) proposed that the author of the Aristeas Book actually followed Alexandrian literary practices and therefore it should be read against its Hellenistic, Alexandrian background (Honigman 2003:48-49, 59). She sees Aristeas as a charter myth, referring to how the readers perceive the story (Honigman 2003:90). It is Honigman's intention to demonstrate that the role and purpose of the Aristeas Book was to turn the story of the origins of the Septuagint into a myth that would be believed by its readers. Honigman compares the techniques used in Aristeas with the rhetorical techniques utilised by Alexandrian historians in order to demonstrate that it was not a compilation for apologetical purposes (Honigman 2003:131; see also Cook 2005:441-461). Even though Honigman does accept the Jewishness of the writing, she maintains that what we have here is a blend of Greek form and Jewish content. According to her the thrust of the treatise is not apologetical, but rather a multi-faceted presentation of Judaism (Honigman 2003:113).

According to Hacham (2005:1-20) the author of the Aristeas Book transformed the biblical stories of the exodus and the giving of the Torah into a new foundation story of Egyptian Jewry. The new story disregards the biblical hostility to Egypt and instead expresses sympathy for the Ptolemaic king who released the Jews from slavery, settled them in Egypt and initiated the translation of the Torah into Greek. He notes that the Aristeas Book should be viewed not only as a historical description of the translation of the Torah into Greek, but also as a historical narrative recounting the Eleazar expedition. However, Hacham indicates that one must search for the underlying ideology in the Aristeas Book: a combination of total loyalty to Judaism and deep and active involvement with the Hellenistic world and culture. This ideology is conveyed by minute details, which are interwoven to create the total effect (Hacham 2005:1-20). One prominent feature is the tendency to emphasise the sanctity and

authority of the Greek translation of the Torah by the 72 elders and to enhance its legitimacy and the readers' commitment to it. There are also various hints and expressions pointing to the great significance of the translation, which is similar to the significance of the Hebrew version. For example, the Alexandrian Jews accepted the translation and forbade any additions or deletions. The Ptolemaic king himself also acknowledged the sanctity of the translation. The translation of the Torah is described in ways similar to those of the biblical giving of the Torah, thereby emphasising the translation's sanctity and authority. The ideology of the Aristeas Book is expressed clearly: a total commitment to the Torah and its sanctity, on the one hand, and a Greek casting for the Egyptian Jews, on the other. At the same time, Hacham indicates that the Aristeas Book should not be viewed as just another book emanating from this ideology, but rather, as a book that attempts to create a foundation story for Hellenistic Jewry. However, Cook (2009) argues for the Septuagint as a Jewish-Hellenistic writing.

From the above, it is evident that there is no consensus on various aspects of this book. Wright (2006:57) and Cook (2008:20-21) argue that the Aristeas Book assumes that the Septuagint was intended to be a free-standing and independent replacement for the Hebrew Pentateuch, which implies a shift in the original intention of the Septuagint as dependent on the Hebrew source text. Aristeas is perhaps part of a debate within Diaspora Judaism concerning the true nature of Jewish heritage and its interpretation of the Jewish Law (Brock 1979:69-87; Wright 2006:50).

Brock's conclusion that Aristeas does not have to do with the origins of the Septuagint but rather with its reception history is accepted in scholarly circles. Aristeas is perhaps part of a debate within Diaspora Judaism concerning the true nature of Jewish heritage and its interpretation of the Jewish Law. In line with Brock, it is suggested that the Book of Aristeas fulfilled a function as a metatext. Obviously, it was not written as a piece of historical research into understanding what had taken place more than a century earlier, with respect to the translation of the Hebrew Torah into Greek, but rather to meet some religious crisis at the time of its composition. Since our knowledge of the Jewish communities during the second century BC is meagre indeed, scholars are left largely to the internal evidence of the Book itself to (re)frame the Septuagint as translation.

In the subsequent paragraphs, it will be argued that Aristeas defends the Greek Pentateuch by insisting on its Palestinian/Jewish origin. A distinction must be made between the modern viewpoint on the nature of the Septuagint, i.e. the perspective of others and the viewpoint put forward by the Aristeas Book i.e. self designation and identification. In what follows the focus will be on the self designation of the Pentateuch as provided by the Aristeas Book. But surprisingly little is said about the actual translation of the LXX. The letter is divided into 322 sections. The first 50 sections relate the story of the king's orders, his letter to Eleazar and Eleazar's reply. The names of the 72

translators are also all found in the first 50 sections. The actual work of the translation and its subsequent acceptance by both the Jewish community and the king are found in sections 301 to 322. The intervening 250 sections give a laudatory description of the temple, the Holy Land, the banquets provided by the king for the 72 translators, his posing of philosophical and ethical questions to the Palestinian guests, and the wisdom and piety of their responses. Aristeas defends the Greek Pentateuch by insisting on its Palestinian/Jewish origin. Its parent text was not a local Alexandrian Hebrew text, but an ornate exemplar sent by the Jerusalem high priest himself. It was not the Alexandrian Jews who made the translation, but official representatives: six from each of the 12 tribes, selected by the high priest, in open assembly. The translation is rendered official by adoption by the Jewish assembly. Like the Hebrew original it was not allowed to undergo any revision, so that it might be preserved unchanged. The bulk of the letter, then, relates not to the circumstances leading to the translation, nor to the translation itself, but rather to a description of the social setting of the translation (Hellenism) and its reception by the Jewish community. The reader of the Aristeas Book must deduce that the Septuagint is Jewish with similar status to the Hebrew writings although there may be differences with the Hebrew writings. The emphasis is on the adequacy and authority of the translation. This is supported by the role of the law of Moses in the Septuagint Proverbs, which has a much more prominent role than is the case in the Hebrew version of Proverbs. This is done by underlining the negative with an emphasis on evil (for example the Greek *Wicked progeny curses its father* versus the Hebrew *There are those who curse their fathers* in Proverbs 30:11). Sometimes the Greek text contains more contrasts than its Semitic parent text. Proverbs 31:1-9 was moved by the translator in order to place 31:10 adjacent to 29:27 for purposes of contrast. In this way the translator deliberately contrasts *an unjust man* with *a courageous wife*.

To conclude this section: The Aristeas Book is similar to the *Dolmetschen* of Luther. The Aristeas Book as a narrative is not a legend, nor a historical account of the origin of the Septuagint, neither is it an apology to justify the translation of the Septuagint. Rather, the Aristeas Book as metatext was written after the translation of the Septuagint was completed. It was a mediation tool to facilitate the differences between the Greek and Hebrew in such a way that free interpretations in the Septuagint Pentateuch would be viewed as orthodox, i.e. similar in status to the Hebrew writings because it is from Palestinian/Jewish origin. Within frame theory the Aristeas Book as narrative is a story that is temporally and causally constituted in a particular way to lead readers to make certain evaluations of the Septuagint Pentateuch.

The Book of Aristeas is a metatext which acts as frame for the Septuagint. This discursive work of framing events and issues for a particular set of addressees is important because it undermines dominant narratives of a given

issue to grow and attract adherents. In this sense, framing processes provide a mechanism through which individuals can ideologically connect with movement goals and become potential participants in movement actions. Aristeeas defends the Greek Pentateuch by insisting on its Palestinian/Jewish origin. The translation is rendered official by adoption by the Jewish assembly and also rendered canonical. Like the Hebrew original it was not allowed to undergo any revision, that it might be preserved imperishable and unchanged.

6. An anti-footnote policy in the King James Version as mediation for religious conflict

When James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603, the text of the Bible was a source of division among religious parties in England rather than a bond of unity. The Puritan's Geneva version (in print 1560-1644) enjoyed broad popularity. Meanwhile the translation of the Bible used in the Anglican Book of Common Prayer (1549, revised 1552, 1559) was under criticism for its inaccuracies. These tensions between Anglicans and Puritans (who insisted that the Reformation in England did not go far enough and that it retained too many Catholic elements) could have torn England apart had they been handled badly. In order to reconcile the differences of the various religious parties, the king called for a conference at Hampton Court in January 1604. After much inconclusive debate, Dr John Reynolds of Oxford and spokesperson for the Puritan group, suggested making a new translation that could be approved by the whole church. Aware of the importance of maintaining religious peace, James decided to make at least some conciliatory gesture by commissioning a new Bible translation to unite them around a common English Bible.

The Bible translation which is known as the King James Version or Authorised Version included in its original publication in 1611 three metatexts in the form of prefaces. The first ("To the Most High and Mighty Prince, James...") was a four-page dedication and the second ("The Translators to the Reader") an eleven-page preface to the translation in which the intentions, concerns, methodologies, and uncertainties of the translators are articulated with great clarity. The third contains an exposition of the genealogies of Israelite history.

Rhodes & Lupas (1997:1-8) and Newman & Houser (2009:74) typify the second preface as an apologia or defense (of the necessity for a translation). It was written by Dr. Myles Smith, later the Bishop of Gloucester. Smith was an Orientalist, and a member of the first Oxford Company of translators, which was responsible for translating the Old Testament books of Isaiah through Malachi and one of the two final revisers of the version. The preface mediated the issues in the following way.

The preface begins with an acknowledgement that no worthy undertaking is without the risk of opposition and misunderstanding. The translators were well

aware that the king's desire to promote the welfare of the church could be met with suspicion and resentment. The primary concern was for the word of God to be clearly understood. To achieve this purpose it is argued that translation is necessary/important. An overview of the history of the ancient translations (Hebrew into Greek and Hebrew and Greek into Latin and into the "vulgar" tongues) is provided to illustrate that translating the Scriptures into the common language of a people is a tradition integral to the history of evangelism. The translators were pressed from the Protestants as well as the Catholics to justify the new (re)translation. For Protestants it is indicated that perfection is not achieved at a single stroke and that a good translation may be improved at careful honing. There were at least three different attempts to revise or replace the Septuagint because of all its imperfections. Secondly, and historically, it was their complaints at Hampton Court about the corrupt state of the Book of Common Prayer that had prompted the king to sponsor a revision. For Catholics it is answered as follows. Firstly, regardless of the skill of the interpreters who render it in the respective language (German, French, Italian or Latin), the king's speech in Parliament is still the king's speech and therefore a translation can still be the word of God. Secondly, they argued that truth can stand in an open market concerning the authorship of Protestant versions. Thirdly, against the complaint that Protestant versions are so often changed and revised it is pointed to the great variety of editions of the Latin Bible sanctioned by Roman authority.

The purpose of the translators was in effect to take up the mantle of Tyndale which produced the first printed English Bible of 1535 and its further modifications in various other translations Matthew's Bible (1537), Taverner's Bible and the Great Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560), and the Bishop's Bible (1568). The translators were instructed to start with the Bishop's Bible, and to test it carefully against earlier English translations, and especially against the text in its original languages. To this end they made use of all the resources available to them: linguistic tools, ancient as well as modern Bible versions and commentaries, especially noting the resources available in the Spanish, French, Italian and German ("Dutch") languages. Two matters concern the editorial policy. The first concerned the use of marginal notes where there is uncertainty about the wording of the original text or about its interpretation. It concerns alternative readings having a claim to authenticity. The second matter concerned the degree of verbal consistency to be observed in translation. The translators do not insist pedantically on verbal consistency. After these observations the preface is concluded with an exhortation to the reader to take the Bible seriously to heart.

The second way in which the translators mediated the conflict was to restrict the nature of footnotes. In their marginal comments the translators avoided the kind of antimonarchic polemical comments that had characterized for example the Geneva Bible. There are mainly three kinds: An asterisk (5200

cases) in the text alerts the reader to cross references in the margin where related passages are indicated. There are about 4000 passages where a dagger in the text points to a note indicating the Hebrew form of a name; the Hebrew meaning of a name; or the literal form of a Hebrew idiom underlying the translation. There are also more than 2500 Old Testament passages where parallel vertical bars point to some comment in the margin, whether a note to explain a Hebrew unit of weight or measure, to flag an ambiguity in the original text, to present an alternative rendering of the original text, or to propose an alternative reading for the original text.

These metatexts regulate the reader's mental preparation for translations which diverge from the accepted interpretation to ensure that free interpretations will be considered as orthodox and thereby serve as a mediating tool of conflicting theological views.

7. The metatext on capital letters for messianic references in the next *Afrikaans Bible* translation

In the twentieth century, Bible translations accompanied by metatexts were very rare. The translations were seen as originals and by removing the metatexts (for example in the King James Version and the Dutch Authoritative Translation (Statevertaling)) the translators are made invisible. Within the second part of the twentieth century a primary concern for meaning and readability has profoundly influenced the trends in Bible translations. However, this kind of translation suppressed the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text by assimilating it to dominant values in the target-language culture.

Twenty-first century Bible translations exhibit a shift away from the common language usage employed in Bible translations in the second half of the twentieth century and instead instill a new awareness in the minds of the readers of the socio-cultural distance between them and the source culture. As a result, Bible translations in the current century again make use of metatexts (for example, the Dutch *Nieuwe Bijbelvertaling*, the German *Das Neue Testament*, the English *Schocken Bible*, the Afrikaans *Die Bybel vir Dowes*, etc).

Metatexts will also play a major role in the next *Afrikaans Bible* translation, a project which is currently under way, as a means to mediate between interpretations of the source text that relate to the Jewish context of the source text as opposed to later Christian interpretations of the text. This section focuses specifically on the metatext created for the next *Afrikaans Bible* translation concerning the dispute about the avoidance of capital letters in the Old Testament to translate so-called messianic names/references.

The Dutch Authorised Bible translation of 1639 indicates which texts can be understood as messianic with notes in the margin of the Old Testament. At that stage the translators did not use capital letters in the text itself to mark

messianic terms. However, since the twentieth century footnotes and margin notes were no longer represented in the printed editions of the Dutch Authorised Bible translation. Capital letters are used in the first letter of a word to indicate messianic terms in the Old Testament which refer to the New Testament (cf. Isaiah 9:5 ‘a child has been born for us, a son given to us...and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace’; see also pronominal references and the word “servant” in Isaiah 53). The 1933 Afrikaans translation and its 1953 revision follow this model. The Afrikaans translation of 1983 does not use capital letters for messianic terms in the Old Testament and returns to the earlier usage of lower case letters as used for centuries.

In the design of the new translation project of the *Afrikaans Bible*, it was decided that footnotes will be used to indicate which of the Old Testament texts may be understood as messianic. It is similar to the model of the Dutch Authorised Bible translation of 1639.

The translation project of the *Afrikaans Bible* was initiated in 2005 by the Afrikaans-speaking churches in South Africa and is a project of the Bible Society of South Africa. All churches using Afrikaans as the language of communication are involved in the project. The translation team reflects mainly the mainstream viewpoints. The project will be carried out in five phases. Until the end of 2010, the project will be in phase 1 and 2. Phase 3 will involve the feedback of churches. However, on 25 February 2008 documents were already received from a (fundamentalist) group under the leadership of two persons (PW Hoek and D Haasbroek) with the title ‘Would you like an Old Testament without the name of Christ?’ The documents were eventually sent out by them to all churches and persons concerned with the *Afrikaans Bible*. The steering committee first considered not to table their objection, but fortunately wisdom prevailed and it was decided to answer them in a circular which also was sent to all churches and persons involved. The title of the metatext is ‘The use of capital letters in parts of Old Testament utilised by the New Testament as references to the Messiah.’ It consists of the following sections:

- Introduction and orientation reflecting the background on the use of capital letters (as provided in this section of the paper);

- Evidence of the source texts and other translations;

- The translation principles of this project;

- The difference between dogmatic interpretation and translation.

The document is argued from a translation studies viewpoint and not from a theological viewpoint. The explanation as provided in the letter was not accepted by those who objected, but there are ongoing discussions concerning the issue. Most importantly, the churches are being informed regarding the translation practice followed in the *Afrikaans Bible* and, while the final outcome is still unclear, it is hoped that they will accept the translation when it is published.

8. Conclusion

In addition to revealing the historically shifting relationship between author and translator, metatexts are useful precisely because they trace the contours of literary ideology and expose the socio-cultural context which commands literary exchanges. The metatext also has the function of calling attention to the translator as co-signer of the work; the metatext thereby calls attention to the intervention of another hand as well as another cultural context in the text.

In his *Circular Letter on Translation*, Luther justified in his free Bible translation as necessary for clarity in German. In addition, Luther added essential traits of the ideal translator in the circular as further justification for his translation.

Aristeas defends the Greek Pentateuch by insisting on its Palestinian origin. Its parent text was not a local Alexandrian Hebrew text, but an ornate exemplar sent by the Jerusalem high priest himself. It was not the Alexandrian Jews who made the translation, but official representatives: six from each of the 12 tribes, selected by the high priest, in open assembly. The translation is rendered official by adoption by the Jewish assembly and also rendered canonical. Like the Hebrew original it was not allowed to undergo any revision, that it might be preserved imperishable and unchanged.

The Translators to the Reader reveals the perspective, the motivation, and the procedures of the King James version's translators as summarized by one of its final editors. No marginal notes are allowed except for explanations of Greek and Hebrew words that could not be easily expressed in the text. This position was a reaction to the many polemical and antimonarchical notes that cluttered the margins of the Puritans' Geneva Bible and played a role in the mediation between the viewpoints of the Anglicans and the Puritans.

Finally, the metatext created for the next *Afrikaans Bible* translation does not solve the dispute concerning capital letters in the Old Testament to translate so-called messianic names/references, but it softens and hopefully enlightens the dispute. Only time will tell if the metatext was successful in solving the disagreement.

One can conclude that a critical function of a metatext to a sacred text is to regulate the reader's mental preparation for free translation to ensure that free interpretations will be considered orthodox. They are thus a critical component of the translation of religious texts.

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