

## Chapter One

### The Holy Marriage

#### David Daniell and the lost art of translation

‘The main thrust of what I want to say is that translating the Bible is an art that we seem to have lost, for mysterious reasons.’ So said David Daniell, the distinguished Tyndale scholar, at a conference in London in February 1995. There has been, to my knowledge, no decisive answer offered to the question implied by his statement. Daniell himself points out some of the central paradoxes of this situation. The ‘we’ of his statement refers, of course, to the community of English-speakers, a language which ‘has never been in better shape . . . It is healthier than ever before, alive and kicking in mainstream, dialects, pidgins and creoles, across the world.’ Surely, he suggests, a language whose expressive power is in such robust health, should be able to accommodate a new scriptural translation of comparable excellence to Tyndale’s? Moreover, as he goes on to say, our knowledge of the relevant source languages and contexts, of the transmission of the texts, has never been better. These two facts alone, he argues, suggest that we should be able to do so much better than Tyndale, who, almost five centuries earlier, was translating into a target language which had limited vocabulary and conceptual apparatus, and with only a comparatively sketchy knowledge of the source language and culture.

We might add to the sense of paradox by observing the enormous flowering of thinking about translation, beginning after Tyndale in the early modern period but taking off in the 19th Century and blooming especially vigorously since the 1960s: if there is still no generally accepted theory of translation, it is not for want of trying. Nor has this theoretical enterprise been conducted only in an academic corner: translation studies has become mainstream, and the problems it considers are widely recognised as important and perhaps urgent in a world where the global flow of goods, people and ideas require constant translation, and where peoples’ inability to understand each other threatens the peace and stability of that world.

We could consider also the amount of scholarly effort and money which has been expended on new Bible versions in English. The NIV, for example, was ten years in planning and a further ten years in execution. It involved more than 100 scholars working intensively in a hierarchy of committees, from the best available source texts, to produce a brand new translation of the whole Bible. Even Ptolemy and his LXX translators could not match this scale of commitment and resource. The NIV, published first in 1978, is only one of several mainstream versions and revisions which appeared in the second half of the twentieth century. Not all of them were quite so well-funded, but each involved a similar army of scholars working with the best resources available.

There is more: besides these major efforts – versions which we will describe as ‘institutional’ for reasons which will become clear – there have also been a series of attempts by scholars, mostly working on their own, sometimes in very small groups, to produce innovative new translations. This tradition, which reaches back well into the 18<sup>th</sup> Century in English (as well as in German) has only accelerated with the passage of time. Daniell’s provocative statement appears half way through a decade in which no fewer than twenty such versions appeared in English, including some like *The Message* which have had a major, if controversial, impact. The trend for new versions continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and shows no sign of abating. Highlights of the continuing process include not only complete Bibles and Testaments, but also many versions of individual books or portions. Everett Fox’s *The Five Books of Moses* (from 1983), which is self-consciously an ‘Englishing’ of the text along the lines of the *Verdeutschung* of Buber and Rosenzweig; Ariel and Chana Bloch’s beautiful *Song of Songs* (1995); Robert Alter’s metrically sensitive renderings of the Psalms (2007), which follow on his acclaimed Pentateuch (2004); Stephen Mitchell’s *Job*, and so on.

In what sense, then, does Daniell’s comment deserve consideration? Perhaps he is, quite simply, wrong? At the least, we might suggest a degree of arrogance in the statement. It is as if a distinguished keynote speaker at the International Automobile Manufacturers’ Conference said: ‘The art of making cars is one which we have lost, for mysterious reasons.’ Such a speaker risks being booed from the stage, his assertion being so manifestly contradicted by the gleaming, high technology product on display all around. Yet the record does not show that Daniell was pelted with vegetables, and in fact his dissatisfaction with contemporary Bible translation is widespread. It is a dissatisfaction which he expresses by way of contrast with Tyndale, but for many more the comparator is the King James Version.

The present work is partly directed at responding to Daniell's implied questions. Is translating the Bible an art we have lost? Are there identifiable reasons for this? And is it an art which we can recover? My answer to all three questions is 'yes'.

### The rules of the art

Let us look at the evidence Daniell adduces for his statement. The procedure is by way of example, and the first concerns the interaction of Laban and Jacob in Genesis 31. Daniell is able to show that whereas Tyndale successfully and economically conveys 'some sense of the voice of Laban as something to be afraid of', the REB makes Laban sound 'like an inadequate – and patronising – personal counsellor.' The problems identified with the REB include lack of gravitas, incorrect register and woolly vocabulary. The next example, from John 14, cites the TEV "Do not be worried or upset", Jesus told them.' Tyndale's rendition was 'Let not your hearts be troubled . . .' Again, register is a key issue: Bible translation should be recognisable spoken English, but in a 'heightened' register. 'The TEV 'is wrong on every single count: for the Greek, for the occasion, for the register; and John's spiritual perception is simply wiped out – the words belong to cheering the disciples up when they had missed a bus. . . . To lose 'a troubled heart' as a concept is a terrible loss indeed.'

My own intention in citing Daniell's paper is not either to agree or disagree with his assessment of the REB or the TEV: as a matter of fact, I find his points well-made and his criticisms of the newer translations very effective, but this is irrelevant to the argument I want to make. What I want to notice here is more procedural.

The first thing to notice is that the argument proceeds almost entirely on an intuitive level. The examples are used to illustrate six general criteria which, Daniell argues, a biblical translation should meet. These can be summarised as follows:

- To be accurate;
- To make sense (no 'holy rubbish' such as may occasionally be found in KJV prophets – Daniell cites Habakkuk 1.9);
- To deal boldly with difficulties (for example the many *hapax legomena* which must be decided in translation from the Hebrew scriptures);
- To accommodate the stylistic differences of the different biblical writers;
- To achieve 'heightened every-day register' such as may be found in present-day use of proverbs;
- To be memorable, such that it can be heard once and remembered.

The first three criteria here are such that it is very unlikely we will find anyone to disagree: are there *any* translators who aim to be inaccurate, to not make sense, to shy away from difficulties? 'To be accurate'-- of course. But what does accuracy mean? What is it that should be accurate to what, and how should it be done? At what level should accuracy be assessed – word, sentence, verse, book or some other level? Is accuracy a question of semantics only, or are there other dimensions – and if so, how should those dimensions be weighed against each other and against semantics? How can accuracy be measured, and who is the judge? The puzzles multiply. Similarly: 'To deal boldly with difficulties.' There is widespread agreement amongst translators that courage is required for what they do: we will explore some of the dimensions of this required fortitude in Chapters Three to Six. For now, though we should observe that, however they are defined, there are 'difficulties' in every single line of biblical translation. It is worth emphasising this point because quite a different impression would be gained from reading much of the literature on biblical translation. Daniell himself focuses on examples involving *hapax legomena*: the word which appears only once in the literature, and where we must resort to guesswork and comparative etymology to arrive at a translation. He cites the treasure arriving on ships in 1 Kings 10, which Tyndale charmingly (and, yes, we must concede, boldly) translates as 'gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks.' Similarly, we find highly theoretically-oriented writers on translation citing difficulties in translating technical terms for harvest processes and so on. The problem with such examples is not that they are not real translation issues – of course they are, and when there is 'thin' evidence for how a particular word is used, or when very 'alien' objects or processes are assumed, it does indeed require some ingenuity in the translator. The problem is the implication that all the *other* words used in a given passage are quite straightforward. In fact, as Steiner reminds us, 'Though they deny it, [even] phrase-books and primers are full of immediate deeps.' When the difference between source and target language spans millennia, the deeps are deeper still, and may be especially impenetrable in the case of very common, everyday words. Only our habit of placing absolute trust in a lexicon, which lists the canonically approved 'equivalents' for an ancient word, leads us to think otherwise. It is the very wealth of evidence which creates the difficulty: like an archaeologist trying to understand an ancient midden heap, we find ourselves much better able to interpret the occasional gem, the oddly-shaped artefact, and quite at a loss to interpret the ubiquitous shards and fragments. When we find in a

passage a common word such as **kardia** ('heart') or **i(ε)reuj-** ('priest'), **giθomai** ('become') or **aggeloj** ('angel') we may reach confidently for our canonically approved 'equivalent', but if we stop to consider what makes us so sure that this is an appropriate translation, doubt sets in. It is another major objective of the present work to instil and foster such doubt, and in the course of the discussion I will attempt to destabilize the sense of certainty in the case of a number of very common words found in Luke's writings.

In all this there is a weird sensation that the last fifty or so years of effort in the area of translation theory have simply not happened, or are irrelevant. Daniell's comments would have been quite appropriate in the period of innocence before any of this work took place. The early 20<sup>th</sup> Century German-Jewish thinker, Rosenzweig, for example, had this to say about Kautsch's German *Textbibel* as long ago as 1926: 'Perhaps there are, in a book as stylistically diverse as the Bible, passages for which this provincial bureaucratic diction is precisely right. But diffused equally over the whole story, it falsifies the tone and thus the "music"'. Rosenzweig's objection is against what he calls *wissenschaftlich* translation, which at best is 'superficial' and at worst allows a passage to be 'transposed from its austere, concrete, sublimity to a relentlessly chatty idiom that scribbles all over the original clarity . . .' Rosenzweig was of course at this point defending the Luther translation against a newer kind of 'scientific' practice, and he was engaged at the time (with Buber) on his own monumental biblical translation project. I cite Rosenzweig (to whom we will return) not negatively against Daniell, but to point to another of the major themes of the present work; and this is the problematic relationship between translation theory and biblical translation practice. For whilst it is obvious that, in making his criticisms, Daniell has ignored the progress of translation theory, it must also be clear that the actual translations coming under his scrutiny are subject to the same criticisms as a translation (in German) appearing three quarters of a century earlier. Perhaps, then, all this putative 'progress' is not really making much progress at all. At the very least, as we will see, the relationship between theory and practice in biblical translation is not a straightforward one, and the complications of this relationship operate at both the institutional and at the individual psychological level.

Daniell's second triad of criteria are in a way more interesting, but also intriguingly in sympathy with Rosenzweig's agenda of 70 years earlier. The question of the different biblical writers' styles is one which could be added to the list of paradoxes: how is it that,

in a period when understanding of genre and stylistics has made such huge strides, this does not seem to be reflected in biblical translation? Daniell's points are made against the TEV and the REB, but he might equally have observed the same uniformity of style in the NRSV or the NIV – in the former a certain limp, elegant blandness; in the latter a relentless, robust literalness. The problem with such observations is that they seem to boil down to just a question of style. So we might say Daniell admires Tyndale's style, and he doesn't like the TEV style; so be it, let them agree to differ and all is well. Stylistics are notoriously subjective; or to make the point in the language of translation theory, stylistics are part of the audience-orientation of a text, of its *skopos*. Daniell's assertion that the register for biblical translation 'should' be a heightened everyday language such as that used in proverbs is just that – an assertion. Even if we could agree in some measure to this assertion (perhaps on the grounds of memorability, Daniell's final criterion?), we would still have to determine what would count as 'heightened', and to whose 'everyday' speech this heightening should relate. What I find 'heightened' may not at all coincide with what he does, and so on.

This brings us to the main procedural point about Daniell's paper. This is that at no point is any comparison made to the source text. Although we are once or twice told that something is, or is not 'true to the Greek', there is no reference to what that Greek (or Hebrew, as the case may be) is. As it is not clear what being 'true' might mean for Daniell, we would perhaps not be much wiser if there was. But, how can two translations, qua translations, be compared at all, other than by reference to the source text? If there is no attempt to do so, then we do end up with what we have observed: with the statement of personal preferences. Although I have chosen to make this point with reference to Daniell, whose preferences are stated in terms of stylistic issues, the same observations could be offered in countless other cases, including cases where the commentators' preferences are theological rather than stylistic. I would include in this those conservative scholars who from time to time object to a certain, perhaps idiomatic, translation on the grounds that it is 'wrong' theologically.

What this omission points to is quite serious. There are, I think, two reasons why Daniell is reluctant to assess the translations as translations – that is, in relation to the source texts they purport to translate. These reasons are related, to each other, and, crucially, to the 'mysterious reasons' to which Daniell alludes in his opening remark.

## The problem of fidelity

Perhaps the fundamental issue is this: in order to engage with the issue of how the translation relates to the source text, one must have some working notion of fidelity to that text, of how such fidelity is to be described and discussed, how it might be measured – in short, one needs a definition of faithfulness. Here, Daniell senses a problem: isn't the whole idea of fidelity a suspect one? On introspection, instead of a clear, theoretically grounded definition of fidelity, he finds a theoretical lacuna. Lacking this grounding, he resorts to his intuitions. When he says that he wants a translation 'to be accurate' he is articulating those intuitions, or, if we prefer, making common sense.

In so doing, he is, I believe, making a perfectly reasonable – perhaps the only intelligent – response to the central problem in contemporary translation theory, at least as it pertains to biblical translation. From the late 1960s onwards, the notion of 'fidelity' in biblical translation was increasingly expressed in terms of 'dynamic equivalence' or, as the theory later developed 'functional equivalence'. Nida and Taber's 1969 book perhaps marks the decisive arrival of this theoretical approach, but it has been elaborated by an entire generation of theoreticians and been the major influence on nearly all the biblical translation projects of the last fifty years. Although the most noticeable surface feature of the theory is its mandating of 'idiomatic' or 'non-literal' translations, its theoretical mainspring is or certainly was an appropriation from Chomskian linguistics; 'fidelity' is defined in terms of 'back-translatability', via the deep structures which are purported to be common to all human languages.

Nida seemed to promise that any utterance in any language can be 'back-translated', via these deep structures, to an 'equivalent' utterance in any other language. For the first time, then, faithfulness in translation could be defined and (in principle, at least) demonstrated. What one had to do was to look behind the utterances to the 'kernels' of meaning, authorising a very 'free' translation style: providing the 'kernels' were the same, fidelity was guaranteed. This idea had understandably caused great excitement in biblical translation circles: here, at last, was a standard of fidelity which not only mandated the kind of idiomatic, democratic translations which the major mission-oriented institutions were itching to commission (and which some individual efforts had already, as we will see, embarked upon), but also was thoroughly *scientific*. A translation such as the TEV could, it seems, at least in principle be *scientifically proved* to be a faithful translation of the source text. Nida and his followers would certainly

(and increasingly, as time went by) admit that in practice the proof was hard to come by. The ‘kernels’ of meaning were difficult to establish with certainty; the ‘deep structures’ of language were perhaps deeper and less easily recoverable than originally thought. There was an increasing uncomfortable awareness that the theory did not really deal with contextual difficulties. However, with more work, better understanding and more sophisticated techniques, fidelity could in principle be shown to operate (or not operate) in a given translation. Not since the infallible ‘translation committee’ of the LXX had such a guarantee been offered, and the great missionary translation bodies seized it eagerly. Fuelled by their enthusiasm, Nida’s project achieved a life and momentum of its own.

As Nida’s project began, in fact, the currents of linguistic philosophy were already moving strongly against him. From within the Anglo-Saxon philosophical tradition, Quine had, for example, already in 1960 put the very idea of synonymy in translation in doubt. Soon, and coming from an entirely different angle, Derrida was undermining the notion of textual determinacy upon which the idea of back-translation also depends. Then Steiner’s critique of Chomskian linguistics in *After Babel* in 1975 called the whole project into question. What part could ‘deep structures’ really play in translation theory if they were so deep that they could never be brought to light? Shouldn’t we be suspicious of a model which claims to be scientific but can neither demonstrate its operation, nor make verifiable predictions? How could a purely linguistic model possibly deal with the infinite variety, complexity and nuance of human expressive powers? Above all, as languages represent different ways of introspecting and of interacting socially with others – different ways of being human – is a scientific/mathematical model the right paradigm at all? Isn’t there something ineluctably social and contextual about language? These criticisms, and many others, put the attempt to found translation theory upon Chomskian linguistics into a pattern of long-term retreat, and led, via a more socio-culturally informed *socio-linguistics*, to the modified form of ‘functional equivalence’. Chomsky himself had already disowned the attempt to use his theory to underpin an approach to translation: ‘The existence of deep-seated formal universals . . . implies that all languages are cut to the same pattern, but does not imply that there is any point by point correspondence between particular languages. It does not, for example, imply that there must be some reasonable procedure for translating between languages.’

The theory of ‘dynamic equivalence’ was, then, subject to early and highly effective criticism. In response, ‘dynamic equivalence’ morphed into ‘functional equivalence’, with a much more nuanced notion of

how language functions in a context which has extra-linguistic as well as linguistic dimensions. The idea of the *function* of a text replaced that of its dynamic effect, and began to deal much more effectively with the question of how reception context might affect that function. For example Vermeer talks of two texts from different cultures which could 'differ to a greater or lesser extent, but . . . would be culturally equivalent, both being considered natural behavioural acts with the same 'function' in their respective culture specific settings.' What is interesting about this for our purposes is that the idea of fidelity (the 'equivalence' part of dynamic equivalence) has been absorbed into that of function (the 'dynamic' part). It has, in other words, been quietly dropped. Equivalence is now defined in terms only of the functions which texts play – functions which may be determined by any number of actors in the process, and which can certainly not be straightforwardly 'read off' from the text.

The term 'equivalence', therefore, represents a ghost concept – it is the ghost of the concept of fidelity, which has quietly died and been buried without a funeral. A number of contemporary translation theorists have noticed the hollowing-out of the term 'equivalence', and try not to use it. Tellingly, though, even though Chomskian 'scientific' equivalence has been shown not to exist, this ghost concept continues to lurk in the literature: – Derrida would describe it as a 'trace' – particularly in the biblical translation community. This is because fidelity is not, in the field of biblical translation, an optional concept in the way it seems to be in much 'secular' translation. This leaves translation theory in a peculiar position. Nida's 'dynamic equivalence' was always a two-stroke engine: the 'dynamic' describes the effect (or function, as it became) of the text; the 'equivalent' describes the relation of fidelity. If the latter fails, the engine won't work. This, I would like to suggest, is the reason why new Bible versions tend to be very reticent about their approach to translation: the preface or 'To the reader' section is usually quite clear, for example, about the approach which has been taken on source-critical issues, but remarkably *unclear* as to translation theory. Metzger's preface to the 1989 NRSV may serve as an example: in amongst several pages of explanation, he has only one sentence on translation theory. 'The Committee has followed the maxim: As literal as possible, as free as necessary.' Similarly, the Good News Bible says only that it is 'faithful . . . to the meaning'.

This brings us back to Daniell's problem in assessing these translations. He is aware that some standard of fidelity should be in operation, but is also aware that the mainstream notion of 'equivalence' as it has been used in biblical translation is at best highly problematic. More importantly, he also knows that it is this notion of 'equivalence'

which has given him the TEV and all the other ‘have-a-nice-day Bibles’, as he calls them. ‘By their fruits shall ye know them’, as his beloved Tyndale would say, and the fruits in this case are not good. So all he can do is resort to his intuitions and give us the commonsense statement that a translation should be ‘accurate.’

## The Curse of the Holy Marriage

There is a second reason why Daniell doesn’t make the comparison with the source text. This is that he already has his fixed reference point – and it is the Tyndale Bible. For him, the only relevant comparison to make is with Tyndale’s translation, not with any Greek or Hebrew source text. Although he would doubtless disagree with the proposition thus baldly expressed, it is nonetheless the hidden assumption behind every line of his paper. Tyndale has become, for him, what Rosenzweig named *Schriftum*, ‘scripture’: the product of a holy marriage between a language and a text. The idea of the holy marriage is that at a certain point in the development of a natural language, a text is encountered which is of such cultural importance that it becomes ‘the book everyone must have read.’ The fact that it is so means that it is not only an instance of that language, but becomes a determinant of it. This text may be either a home-grown text (such as Dante, for Italian), or a translation – such as the Luther Bible, for *Hochdeutsch*. Translations are, for him, subject to a ‘certain law of uniqueness . . . (E)very great work of language can in a certain sense be translated into another language only once.’ Although Rosenzweig did not express himself in these terms, we might say that the ‘holy marriage’ text establishes a certain set of agreed and ‘authorised’ ‘equivalents’. Once Luther has decided that **pištij** (pistis) ‘means’ Glaube (‘faith’), then it does so mean, and becomes embodied in the language.

‘What God has joined, let no man put asunder.’ The **i(ə)roj ganoj**, the holy marriage, is the perfect union, achieved at just the right time, unrepeatable, and authoritative for all time. At least ‘It remains immortal as long as the connection between this moment and the past is not catastrophically ruptured.’ Rosenzweig articulates a schema of translation history in which, when a language and text first ‘encounter’ each other, sketchy, tentative attempts at translation begin to appear. These ‘trots’ are followed by a good ‘working draft’, and then, finally, the holy marriage occurs: text and language find each other. For Rosenzweig, this unrepeatable moment tends to arrive just as a *Schriftsprache*, a literary language, is being formed. At this point, a community of language speakers is longing for the text: ‘it is the time

when the receiving people comes forth of its own desire and in its own utterance to meet the wingbeat of the foreign work- the time when the act of reception is motivated not by curiosity, by interest, by edification, not even by aesthetic pleasure, but by the whole range of a historical movement.'

Now, Rosenzweig was thinking about Luther and the German Bible in naming the holy marriage. However it will be very obvious that, if he is right, we could make the same observations about the English tradition, in which Tyndale and the KJV play such a significant part. The KJV meets the requirements of a 'holy marriage' translation: it comes along shortly after a period of vigorous development of the language; it is of overwhelming cultural importance; and it has stood the hackneyed 'test of time.' One of the evidences evinced by Rosenzweig for the existence of an **ićroj ganoj** translation, is that despite the passage of time it is still readily understandable by a modern language user. The Luther Bible, the KJV and Tyndale all pass this test; their predecessors, even by only a few years, don't. The holy marriage is facilitated by a willingness of the host language to accept innovation: Tyndale was, we might say, 'right' to translate Job 19.20 'by the skin of my teeth'. He was 'right' because his rendering of the difficult Hebrew source was not only accepted but savoured and enjoyed and remembered, and became part of English, so that modern, more semantically 'correct' renderings are simply '*not* right'. No subsequent translator can ever be accorded this privilege. teiner shares this view of great translation, which 'can only occur once' for a given work. For him, though, that moment might occur only once the reception *Schriftsprache* has some history: the KJV was accepted so quickly and so completely because it was written not in a contemporary Jacobean idiom, but in an earlier, Elizabethan form. It arrived in the world fully formed, pre-packaged with a certain nostalgia, and with the 'weight' which can only come from familiarity and repetition. It also had a magnificent forerunner, in the form of Tyndale.

In English Bible translation, we might regard the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, the fragmentary efforts of the Middle Ages, Aelfric's glosses and the various Psalters as the 'trots'; the 14<sup>th</sup> Century Wycliffite Bible as the 'good working draft'; and Tyndale and the other 16<sup>th</sup> century translations (which all, to a greater or lesser extent, had some dependence on Tyndale) as the 'final drafts'. The KJV then represents the holy marriage itself, a marriage which was institutionalised and given the full authority and majesty of the state. Although there are of course different ways of schematising translation history, the view which Rosenzweig expresses is comfortably in accord with many

scholarly accounts of the translation of the Bible into English. For example, Lynne Long evaluates the Wycliffite Bible translators thus: 'Their achievement lay not so much in the quality of the work, but in the addressing, however crudely, of the specific problems of translating the Scriptures into English . . . Theirs was the first complete rough draft in a lengthy process that was not to be completed satisfactorily until centuries later.' We should carefully note here the tell-tale word 'completed'. The process of translation is presented here in an almost teleological mindset, with one generation of translators providing a 'rough draft' for another which follows. Once Tyndale and the KJV had 'completed' the work, the Holy Marriage was in place.

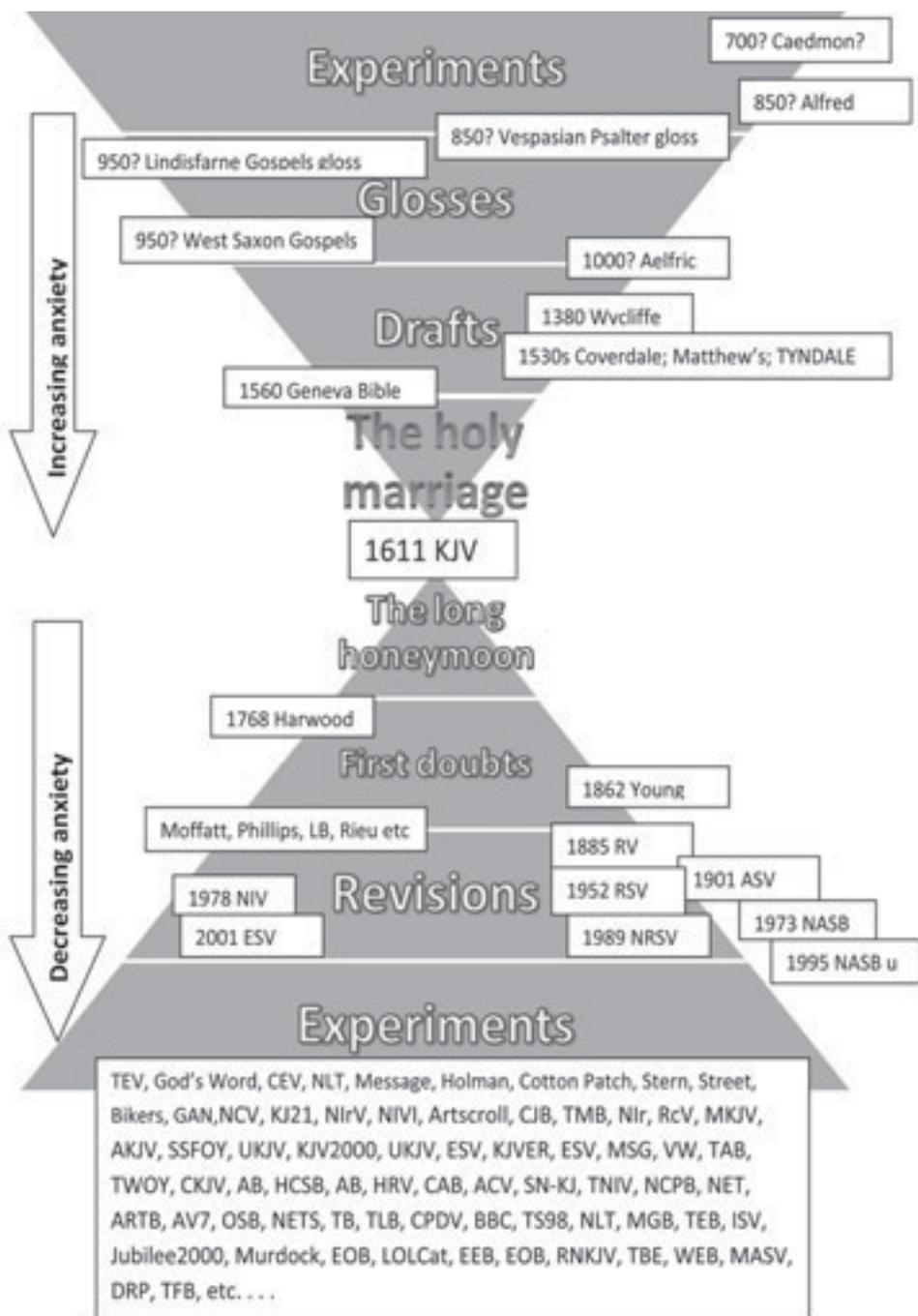
After the promulgation of the Holy Marriage in 1611, there was a long, contented honeymoon. English and the Bible had found each other, and following the moment of ecstatic union, all was well for two and a half centuries. Renewed translation work did begin in the form of more or less idiosyncratic individual efforts in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, but the possibility of institutionally sanctioned revision did not appear until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century did the floodgates really open, with the results which we observe.

Figure 1, below, provides a greatly simplified schematic representation of this interpretation of the translation history:

Such a schematic is, of course, highly simplified. Amongst the features which it ignores are: the complex web of influences between the various versions; the influences from outside – particularly Luther but also the Roman Catholic Douay version; and the differences which arise from the various source texts used (including the major factor of the Latin Vulgate, which was the source for all of the translations until Tyndale). It also ignores the fact that not everyone was completely satisfied with the holy marriage, when it came: the Geneva Bible of 1560, for example, lingered for a long time after 1611 in certain circles.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this schema is not to attempt an accurate and complete portrayal of translation history, but to gesture towards the indisputably important position which the KJV has, and towards certain problems associated with that position. All lines of influence pass through it: it is the fulcrum of English Bible translation. Rosenzweig's main concern was to draw attention to the dangers involved in the phenomenon of the holy marriage. It may, of course, prove to be both a blessing and a curse. The key danger is that the translated text may *itself* come to be regarded as 'Scripture' or *Schriftum*. An authoritative interpretation

1 Famously, it was the Bible taken by the Pilgrim Fathers to Massachusetts in 1620, and seems to have been the only version used by the Plymouth and Virginia settlements. See Berry, 2007, p.22.



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then stands as an obstacle to *further* acts of interpretation. Rosenzweig was fully alive to the dangers of idolatry in this situation: in protestant German culture, Luther's Bible became and remained 'the bearer of its [the church's] physical presence,'<sup>1</sup> and idolatry was avoided only by virtue of the presence of a vigorous oral culture surrounding it. In sermon and exegesis, the implacable permanence of the monumental translation was ameliorated. The holy marriage must not, in other words, be taken too seriously: if it becomes 'set in stone', it effectively prevents any further translation, and therefore any further true reading of the Bible. For this reason, Rosenzweig was in favour of continually updating and revising the *Lutherbibel*. 'Every translation is a messianic act, which brings redemption nearer.'<sup>2</sup> He was also keen to produce a completely different version of the Hebrew scriptures, one which bore as little relationship as possible to Luther's work. This impulse resulted in the collaboration with Martin Buber and the marvellous *Die Schrift* whose publication only began many years after his death, and once its potential readership had been decimated by the holocaust.<sup>3</sup>

We may postulate that in Daniell's mind, the Tyndale Bible has become *Schriftum*, the authoritative standard by which other versions (including the original) are measured. Daniell's 'angle' on all of this is that he has gone behind the text which we most naturally see as the holy marriage translation, to the draft, which in his opinion contributes what is best to it; however, this is an unimportant detail for the present argument. What is important for us to see is that a **icroj gamoj** translation can effectively *prevent* any new translation. Nor can this be remedied simply, as Rosenzweig suggests, by permitting revision and retranslation. In the chapters which follow below, we will encounter an enormous quantity of evidence that translation of the Bible into English effectively ceased in 1611 with the completion of the KJV. Since that date there have been many revisions but no new interpretations. I will work hard to substantiate this audacious claim: amongst the phenomena we will encounter are the following:

### *The tramlines of interpretation*

In version after version, what we find are endless revisions of the same basic translation. Although it is evident throughout the text, it may be illustrated by examples from poetic passages such as the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55) and the other Lukan hymns. It is especially noticeable here because it is the characteristic of poetry to

1 Rosenzweig, 1925 (in Rosenwald, tr.1994), p.54.

2 Preface, I *Die Schrift*, 1954.

3 Publication of *Die Schrift* began in 1954 and was completed in 1962.

admit of a wide range of interpretation; and yet we find that, however many times the re-translation is attempted, the interpretation which emerges is always mysteriously the same. However many times we revisit Mary's opening statement, we cannot escape from the beautiful 'My soule magnifieth the lorde. And my sprete reioyseth in god my savioure . . .' There are, of course, many different interpretations of Mary's song amongst commentators and exegetes. Even a mainstream commentator like Fitzmeyer observes that the piece can be interpreted as a reiteration of Hannah's song in 1 Samuel 2, as a canonical psalm, as a Maccabean victory hymn, or even along the lines of the Qumran War Scroll.<sup>1</sup> Feminist interpreters have, naturally, taken great interest in the Magnificat, and have noticed that there is something very odd about it as a song on the lips of a young woman who has just heard that she is to bear a child: the political and economic themes, the focus on power and overturning of the social order. Schaberg interprets Mary's exaltation as the reaction to being rescued from the shame of rape or seduction, the **tapeiñwsij** from which she is saved then referring to the law on this matter in Deuteronomy 22.24.<sup>2</sup> It is also possible to see a certain self-preoccupation in the song – Mary's focus is not on the baby to be born, but on herself, as is clear from the five-fold repetition of the first person pronoun in vv 46 to 49. In mentioning these possible interpretations, my purpose is not to choose between them, but to observe that – not surprisingly for a poetic passage – there are *many* possible ways of reading it. What *is* then surprising, is that there are (to my knowledge) no translations in English which substantially stray from Tyndale's:<sup>3</sup> none which pick up on Mary's astonishment at the way the shape of her life has been changed, or the questions she has about it, or her preoccupation with the apparently chaotic nature of divine power, for example. None, even, which draws out Mary's disgraced condition at the time or the pathos of her naive motherly optimism, an optimism very soon to be shattered by Simeon (Luke 2.34-35). The tramlines of interpretation are encountered even (or perhaps especially) in those versions which attempt a 'radical re-telling.'<sup>4</sup> What *The Message* yields, for example, is, as so often, a 'jazzed

1 Fitzmeyer, 1970, I, p.358.

2 Schaberg, J., 1990, p.100.

3 I am not suggesting here or elsewhere that Tyndale's interpretation was novel at the time; in fact, his rendition was quite well in accord with Wycliffe's, Luther's and even the Vulgate. The 'holy marriage' does not necessarily represent, and probably will not be, a work of remarkable innovation: rather, it is the point at which a tradition, which may be long established, crystallises.

4 This is the self-appointed task of 'Good as New' (see Appendix) but it

up' version of the same familiar interpretation: 'I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.' Long before *The Message* appeared, Steiner summarised a certain kind of translation practice thus: 'Too often, the translator feeds on the original for his own increase. Endowed with linguistic and prosodic talents, but unable to produce an independent, free life-form, the translator . . . will heighten, overcrowd, or excessively dramatize the text which he is translating to make it almost his trophy.'<sup>1</sup> *The Message* here, rather than attempting a genuine, present day interpretation of Mary's song, merely produces an inflated version of the traditional interpretation. This accounts for what we can only describe as the somewhat grotesque, almost comic nature of much of the work: it is as if we were to take a 17<sup>th</sup> Century Englishman and ask him to deliver the Bible in rap. *The Message* (and other versions with same agenda) represent a 17<sup>th</sup> Century interpretation of the Bible, wrapped in 20<sup>th</sup> Century speech-forms.

### *Recurrent fascination with 'literal' translation*

The argument that scriptural translation should be 'literal' or 'essentially literal' has a very long and respectable history, and it will not go away.<sup>2</sup> As we will see in Chapter Six, there are some important respects in which literal translation is to be preferred to 'functional equivalence'. Here, though, I would like to point to a feature of the arguments used, which illustrates the continuing stultifying effect of the Holy Marriage on translation practice. When advocates of literal translation make their case, they often do so by invoking a list of canonical words which 'should' be present. For example Grudem, approaching the Magnificat says: 'The verse contains both the Greek word for "soul" (psyche) and the Greek word for "spirit" (pneuma). Essentially literal translations all translate them as "soul" and "spirit" (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, NET, ESV and HCSB. . . ). But dynamic equivalence translations leave out Mary's spirit and mostly leave out her soul as well . . .'<sup>3</sup> This statement of the case is so thoroughly steeped in the 'holy marriage' that it is almost indistinguishable from it: the 'essentially literal' translations, we note, are all those stemming from the authoritative KJV which is set at the head of the list. Its authority, moreover, is so total that the ancient Greeks even anticipated it; so they even had a 'Greek word for "soul"' and a 'Greek

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could equally be applied to many other recent versions.

1 Steiner, 1975, p.423.

2 Competent recent statements of the case include Ryken, 2002, and Grudem, in Ryken, Collins, Poythress, Winter, 2005.

3 Grudem et al, 2005, p.39.

word for “spirit” and so on! The literalist case is often stated thus, and is entirely based on the unstated assumption that it is the KJV (representing the holy marriage between English and New Testament Greek) which gives us the authoritative list of which English words are ‘for’ which Greek words (or even, as Grudem seems to be saying, vice versa). I have not been able to find a living advocate of ‘literal’ translation who does not share this assumption,<sup>1</sup> which is, of course, not logically integral to ‘literalism’: it would be perfectly logical to argue in favour of ‘essentially literal’ translation, whilst proposing that **yuxh&** be translated ‘breath’ and **pneuma** be translated ‘wind’. In Chapter Six we look at ‘essentially literal’ translation again, naming Grudem’s variety of literalism ‘Gametic literalism’, but noting at the same time that it is not necessarily so.

### *The missionary project*

We will encounter in Chapter Three a case where the translator (Nida, in this instance) seems to be attempting to translate not the Greek original of Acts, but an English version, into the target African language. I will argue that this practice is, in fact, the norm in missionary translation. What the translator or translator’s aid is attempting to do is to facilitate the target language’s encounter with *our interpretation of the Bible*, not with the original text. This may be observed both in how the text is translated, in the provision of textual notes, commentaries, and study aids. The reference point is always the translator’s favoured version of the **ic&roj g&no&j**, the Holy Marriage. So, for example, we are told by Ernst Wendland that in translating Ruth 1.22 for a certain audience, we have to note that ‘The time reference is important, since in a Tonga sociocultural setting it would immediately arouse the suspicions of the people whose village Naomi was entering. A person does not usually move during the period extending from after the fields have been planted until after the harvest has been completed. One’s crops mean life, and therefore it must have been some serious offence which drove Naomi away from her former home at such a time. Perhaps it had been that she was guilty of practising witchcraft – after all, were not all her men now dead?’<sup>2</sup> Wendland’s point is that the translator has to find some way of preventing the Tongans from forming a ‘highly plausible, though mistaken, interpretation for the receptor language audience.’<sup>3</sup> What seems to be important to Wendland is that the target audience for his

1 Examples of non-living proponents of non-gametic literalism include the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century dispensationalist, A.E. Knoch, whose *Concordant Version* represents an independent-minded literalism. See *Abbreviations*.

2 Wendland, 1987, p.171, cited in Gutt, 2000, p.94.

3 Gutt, 2000, p.95.

translation forms an interpretation of it in line with his own – in this case, including the idea that the chronological information conveyed carries no significance as to Naomi's motivation for the journey or her state of mind.<sup>1</sup> The projected Tongan translation must, in other words, conform to the **ie'roj ganoj**: no other interpretation could be valid. If this is not sufficiently clear in the translation itself, it must be rammed home by footnotes. This is presumably because, in the words of another missionary translator, 'People from cultures that are just now coming in contact with the Bible do not have the benefits of a Christian heritage and so have more to learn . . .'<sup>2</sup> The arrogance of this standpoint is breathtaking: there is not a hint of recognition that the Tongan obsession with witchcraft, which Wendland finds so unacceptable, might be just the right interpretive 'key' for this aspect of Ruth. What, exactly, is it which makes him so certain that his 'early-modern scientific' interpretation is better? There is a double tragedy here: the Tongans are prevented from having their own genuine 'first encounter' with this piece of scripture; and we are prevented from learning from that encounter. The tragedy is all the more poignant because it is irremediable: the Tongans (or the Adiokrou, or the Silt'i, or whichever minority language group we are discussing) can never re-live this moment.

### *The history of translation and re-translation*

One thing which Daniell does not do, we should note, is condemn translation *per se*. This positive approach to translation is on the whole the dominant one in the Western Judeo-Christian tradition, though always with strong dissenting voices. There are three decisive moments in this tradition: the LXX was the first, and perhaps the most important. Because it became the authoritative scripture of the Christian church, it is easy to forget that it was conceived within a Jewish context as a 'holy marriage' between Greek and Hebrew. Initially certainly tolerated and perhaps welcomed within Judaism,<sup>3</sup> it only became unacceptable once it had become the authoritative translation for the early Christian church,

1 As a matter of fact, some commentators suggest that Naomi may indeed be feeling guilty about something at this point in the story – see Robertson Farmer, in NIBC 1998.

2 Hill, 2006. To be fair to Hill, she goes on to say that 'we are all learners', and her study of the Adiokrou of West Africa does acknowledge that that people may have something to teach us about the first century Jewish conception of the supernatural.

3 Philo, certainly, was enthusiastic in his endorsement of the marriage. See *On the Life of Moses*, 2.6.36, 37. Some scholars also see the Letter of Aristeas as also representing a Jewish view of the translation. See Seidman, 2006, p.47.

and implicated in disputed readings – this is, perhaps, an example of the ‘fundamental rupture’ which Rosenzweig talks about, as the only way a holy marriage can be broken.<sup>1</sup> The next decisive moment is the acceptance of the Greek gospels (which represent a double-translation, from oral Aramaic to written Greek); and the translation of the Greek scriptures into Latin, most particularly into Jerome’s ‘Vulgate’. There have always been dissenting voices, but this positive tradition remains dominant. The key documents of Christianity, unlike those of Islam, were not dictated by God to a scribe who simply wrote them down; there has usually been an acceptance of the secondary nature of scripture, as penned by individuals who were indeed inspired by God, but whose autographs we have lost. The key texts of the Reading of the Law (Nehemiah 8), the Great Commission (Matthew 28) and Pentecost (Acts 2) seem to mandate such translation as may be necessary to take God’s word to all his people in a form which they can in some sense understand.<sup>2</sup>

Daniell, of course, speaks from within the broad Protestant English tradition, and for him it is perhaps self-evident that translation is possible, necessary and desirable; yet there is also within his statement the trace of an anxiety that none of these things are so. The Holy Marriage is the balm for this anxiety. Seidman’s recent study of the history of Jewish-Christian translation provides a fascinating survey of the successive building and resolution of this anxiety, which will not go away, because it arises from something quite fundamental; namely the Christian’s anxiety that his or her faith relies on the translation of another religion’s foundation documents.<sup>3</sup> One way of viewing the history of translation of the English Bible is in terms of the progressive build of anxiety during the period of ‘trots’ and ‘working drafts’ (i.e. up to and including Wycliffe and Tyndale), to the point of ecstasy, at which the holy marriage is achieved (Tyndale/the KJV). Thereafter, anxiety progressively declines: the *Schriftum* is in place and inviolable, therefore everybody can relax. During the period of building anxiety, the arguments against translation form themselves on the lips of those in authority, those who have

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1 That this particular ‘holy marriage’ begins as a romance and ends in bitter divorce can be deduced even from the language of scholarship on the subject. Seidman observes that Aristetas ‘lovingly details the social intricacies, the hesitations and flirtations of the Septuagint romance . . .’ (p.50). The divorce can be represented by the new Jewish Greek translations by Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotian – usually thought of as unsuccessful ‘affairs’, they nevertheless spelled the end of the marriage.

2 Further texts may be cited in this vein: Zephaniah 3.9, and Acts 8.26-39 perhaps have important translational elements.

3 Seidman, 2006, especially pp.1-36.

'political' responsibility.<sup>1</sup> The anxiety is not that people will be able to access the Scriptures, but that a new translation will represent a new interpretation, and that this novelty will cause dissension and division in the Body of Christ.<sup>2</sup> This anxiety is, as we well know from the bloody history of the Reformation, both well-founded and rational; in this context, the putting to death of recalcitrant translators and would-be translators is completely understandable.

Once the **iĉroj ganoj** is achieved, though, the 'political' argument begins to wane. The authorities begin to appreciate that though new translations may continue to appear, they will not contradict the supreme interpretive act embodied in the holy marriage. Subsequent attempts at re-translation are thus viewed with progressively more tolerance, and finally are even welcomed; the role of recalcitrant is thrust on the poor lay-Christian, who is asked to struggle with yet another 'up to date' version of the same interpretive act. Church bodies are happy to commission and finance what are either explicitly or implicitly revisions. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, incumbent church leaders show themselves eager to endorse a variety of new translations of very different complexions.<sup>3</sup>

1 St Augustine; Archbishop Arundel; the earlier Henry VIII, Thomas More, etc.

2 St Augustine's famous correspondence with St Jerome on the latter's Latin translation work, which became known as the Vulgate, provides the paradigm for what will follow. Augustine's arguments are essentially political: '... it will cause extreme difficulty if your translation is widely adopted: the Latin churches will then differ violently from the Greek churches.' Letter 71.6, tr. Kelly. Although different arguments are used to address the expediencies of different times, the common theme is not the evil of translation itself but (in the words of More) the fear 'lest if it were had in every man's hand there would great peril arise and that seditious people would do more harm therewith than good and honest folk should take fruit thereby.' (More, Complete Works, v.6, p.332).

3 In 2004, Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, endorsed Nicholas King's new rather literal translation of the New Testament as 'a fine and quite distinctive addition to the ranks of Scripture translations. As a guide to the kind of study that will nourish a robust and grown-up faith, it will be hard to beat.' In the same year 'Good as New' appeared, a translation exercise of a very different kind, involving substantial re-writes, ditching parts of the traditional canon and adding new parts. It, too, received a ringing endorsement from Williams. The role of political/pastoral leadership is interpreted here as embracing and welcoming variety, and to this extent is in part merely 'political correctness'; what is surprising, nonetheless, is the great latitude in interpretation of what is, after all, the foundation document for the institution of which he is head. Such latitude is born only from a complete confidence that, whatever interpretation it is which emerges, it will only be a new manifestation of the **iĉroj ganoj**.

We may, then, venture some tentative answers to David Daniell's implied questions. Yes, the art of biblical translation is something we have lost. The reasons for this are not, in fact, mysterious: the key problems are the overwhelming presence of the **iĉroj ganoj**, which inhibits any subsequent act of interpretation, permitting only revisions; and the absence of clear theoretical criteria of fidelity, which criteria would give a foothold from which the Holy Marriage could be challenged. The problem paradoxically turns out to be the very 'model of excellence' which Daniell holds up for our consideration.

Is there a remedy? To my mind, the only possible solution is to approach the problem from a theoretical angle. Only from the firm ground of a robust theory of translational faithfulness can the beast of 'the holy marriage' be tackled. Without such a foundation, the translator is always going to be overwhelmed; and in this respect his or her position is very different from that of Tyndale (or Jerome, or Luther, for that matter.) Tyndale proceeded without what we would recognise as a clear theory of translation, we may conjecture. As **prodromoj** to the **iĉroj ganoj** he did not need one. The purity and innocence of his approach is not available to latter-day translators: just to manoeuvre our frail craft around the huge monument which our predecessor created, we need far better navigation equipment than he ever had.

### The need for theory

Our critical examination of David Daniell's paper serves as an example of what happens when the examination of translation issues takes place in a theoretical vacuum. In the absence of a firm platform from which to survey the issues, the only approach is to rely on common sense and intuition. Part of my argument is that this is a permissible strategy up to and including the consummation of the **iĉroj ganoj**, but not thereafter. The principal reason for this is that one of the effects of a **iĉroj ganoj** translation is to govern the intuitions of the relevant language community: it just seems so obvious and natural that the text should be translated a certain way, that intuition alone is never going to suggest an alternative.

A pioneer, arriving in a new and lushly fertile country, but one that is empty of human habitation, may proceed by responding to his new environment in simplicity, and with a certain spontaneity: there will be problems, but they will be overcome each in their turn. There is also a certain sense of provisionality, of improvisation: the settler knows that the rude huts he is building today will, if colonisation proves successful, be rebuilt and improved by his successors. Thus, for example, the two

versions of the Wycliffite Bible in the 1380s have this air. As soon as the first version was complete, in 1384, a quite substantial revision began. In the Prologue to the latter, the author (possibly John Purvey) declares that, 'a symple creature haþ translaid þe Bible out of Latyn into English,' and appears to encourage future translators to continue the work.<sup>1</sup>

Should the traveller arrive in the new country and find, on the other hand, that it is already populated, that there are thriving settlements with already established customs and practices, he must adopt a different strategy. He or she has to deal in some way with what is already there. She or he would be wise to remain on ship for a while, and work out a strategy, whether it is one of positive engagement, hostility, or 'neutral' disengagement. There is no viable strategy in which the efforts of predecessors can be simply ignored.

The KJV, even as it arrives, is already showing some consciousness of its status as the holy marriage between English and Bible. 'The Translators to the Reader' with which it is prefaced acknowledges the efforts of predecessors, saying,

Truly, good Christian reader, we never thought from the beginning that we should need to make a new translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one (for then the imputation of Sixtus had been true in some sort, that our people had been fed with gall of dragons instead of wine, with whey instead of milk); but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against, that hath been our endeavour, that our mark.<sup>2</sup>

The KJV acknowledges predecessors but is careful not to encourage successors; it is self-consciously seeking to establish an authoritative 'principal' translation, 'not justly to be excepted against.'

Despite this discouragement, the Bible, or substantial parts of it, has been translated into English several hundred times and all but a few handfuls of these efforts have been undertaken after 1611; that is, after the consummation of the 'holy marriage'.<sup>3</sup> This is the Bible which we call the Authorised Version, and every translation produced after it has had to deal with its existence, and therefore in some sense to bear its imprint. Anyone with the temerity to attempt yet another English translation is

1 KJV, Hudson ed., 1978 (1388), The Prologue, pp.67-72.

2 Norton, ed 2005, (1611)'The Translators to the Reader', xxxi.

3 There is no way of being certain about the numbers: both because many translations achieve only a small circulation and are hard to track down, and because there is so much current translation activity. See the Appendix for a taste of translation activity since 1990.

highly likely simply to produce another child of this fruitful marriage. Some do so deliberately, their retranslation being more or less explicitly positioned as a revision or ‘update’ of the **ićroj ganoj**, a renewal of vows, as it were. So, for example, the ESV, which declares itself to be ‘in the classic mainstream of English Bible translations over the past half-millennium.’<sup>1</sup> The starting point for the exercise was the 1971 RSV, but ‘our goal has been to retain the depth of meaning and enduring language that have made their indelible mark on the English-speaking world and have defined the life and doctrine of the church over the last four centuries.’ In the statement of its translation principles, nothing more is said than that it is ‘essentially literal’; and this is understandable – to perform such an update, no particular theory is required, because the **ićroj ganoj** is not being challenged, only brushed up for the present day.

Others seek to position their translation work more radically. So, for example, Andy Gaus’ ‘The Unvarnished New Testament’<sup>2</sup> declares, in its blurb, ‘The fresh approach taken by this gifted translator strips away the thick layers of convention and ‘Biblical’ language which often clouds the meaning of the original words.’ Unfortunately, Gaus does not explain to us on what theoretical basis he has approached the work. The author of the introduction (not Gaus, but George Witterschein) states, absurdly, that ‘what Gaus has done is to translate the Greek as if the nearly two thousand years of Christian history had not occurred. He has translated the Greek into modern American English, period.’ A glance at any page of the translation is enough to show that this, of course, is not true;<sup>3</sup> nor could it be true. The words, the very categories of thought available to Gaus are, in part, the product of this Holy Marriage. What if Gaus had been locked in a sound-proof box for his entire life, and forbidden to read or hear any word from outside? He would thereby escape the influence of the **ićroj ganoj**, but, if this had been his fate, he would not, of course, have been able to do the translation – for he would not know English, or have any idea of how to communicate with modern American English speakers about how they viewed the world.

Gaus cannot, of course, escape the influence of the holy marriage. Any translator must deal with it. And as is often the case, those who naively

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1 ESV, Preface, vii.

2 Gaus, Andy, 1991.

3 For example, and to continue the ‘case study’ opened in the Introduction to the present work, the Magnificat begins: ‘My soul magnifies the Lord,/ And the breath within me has been delighted by God my savior.’ The ‘breath’ is a welcome innovation – but everything else remains ‘holy marriage’, and, most importantly, the interpretation of Mary’s song which is offered does not stray one iota from the specification entrenched in the KJV.

assume that they can ignore it are the ones most likely to be steeped in it.<sup>1</sup> Willing or not, all bear the genetic likeness of their parents.

It is important to appreciate the attitude toward theory which I seek to advocate here. I am *not* suggesting that there is any final theoretical solution to the problem of translation (George Steiner famously refused to call his 'poetics' of translation a theory at all.)<sup>2</sup> The open-ended human problem of understanding and misunderstanding each other is not susceptible to a magic bullet. What I *am* saying, though, is that if, in the case of biblical translation, we approach the work thinking that we are guided by 'common sense' or 'intuition', we are sure to simply reproduce the **ięroj ganoj**. The purpose of theory is to give us a platform outside the field of forces created by the series of 'equivalents' in the holy marriage, from which we can look at the problem again.

### What kind of theory?

In 1975 George Steiner bewailed what he termed 'the sterile triad' which had characterised English discourse about translation 'at least since Dryden.'<sup>3</sup> The idea that a translation can be too literal, too free, or just right is as long-lived a notion as the story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*;<sup>4</sup> to confirm that it is alive and well, we need to look no further than Metzger's 'To the Reader' for the NRSV of 1989, which we have already mentioned.<sup>5</sup> Steiner pointed out that the approach we have chosen Metzger to exemplify (there are many, many other examples in biblical translation) seems to suggest that translation is a one-dimensional problem, whose issues relate only to the mechanical question 'How literal should we be?' He wanted to return translation to the hermeneutic fold: to try to position translation as the interpretive question at its most acute -- 'How should we understand this other?'<sup>6</sup> This agenda is picked up by Paul Ricoeur, who speaks of translation as 'linguistic hospitality . . . the act of inhabiting the word of the Other paralleled by the act of receiving the word of the Other into one's own home, one's own dwelling.'<sup>7</sup> Steiner and Ricoeur and all sympathisers in between,

1 One is reminded of John Maynard Keynes' famous dictum that 'everyone who claims to be practical is a slave of some usually defunct theory.'

2 Steiner, 1992, (Preface to the Second Edition of Steiner 1975), xv.

3 Steiner, 1975, p.249ff.

4 See Porter, p.144 in Porter and Boda, 2009.

5 Another example is Barnstone's explanation about his own *Restored New Testament* (see *Abbreviations*). Using Dryden's schema, he finds himself in 'the difficult middle way'. Barnstone wants to 'make the literal literary', a nice slogan but not developed in theoretical terms.

6 Steiner, 1975, p.18.

7 Ricoeur, 2006 (2004), pp.19-20.

insofar as they can be said to have a ‘programme’ to change approaches to translation, have failed – certainly as regards biblical translation. Steiner’s famous ‘Hermeneutic Motion’<sup>1</sup> offers a four-fold approach to translation which, I argue elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> provides an ‘ethics of translation’ of enormous explanatory power and subtlety, yet it has not been successful as a guide to the actual nitty-gritty of translation. It is too philosophical, too elevated in tone, and insufficiently reproducible. In the intellectual atmosphere of the 1970s, when so many of the large-scale efforts at Bible re-translation were launched, the available options did, to those holding the purse-strings, seem to be ranged along that same one dimension: either one went for ‘literal’ (ESV, NKJV, NASB, etc.) or one went for ‘free’ (TEV, CEV, and later The Message), or something in-between (NIV, NRSV etc.). If one opted for the ‘free’ end of the scale, it was usually felt that some theoretical justification was required, and this was without exception sought and found in Eugene Nida’s exposition of the doctrine of ‘dynamic equivalence’, or, as it later became, ‘functional equivalence.’

What is of interest for our argument here is that Nida’s approach, even while apparently mandating great latitude in translation practice, did nothing to loosen the grip of the Holy Marriage on biblical translation. His concept of ‘equivalence’, when combined with his own profoundly conservative theology, simply reproduced the **iĉroj ganoj** in another form. It encouraged the ‘one dimensional’ view of translation, and dragged the argument back onto this ground, away from the hermeneutic approach which Steiner and others were advocating, so that the opponents of ‘dynamic equivalence’ (and ‘functional equivalence’, as it became) found themselves able to argue *against* it only by arguing *for* literalism.

We might, then add to the list of baleful consequences of the Holy Marriage, the enslavement of theory to its purposes. To reiterate the argument: (1) The **iĉroj ganoj** appears at a certain point in history. It is the unique moment when a language community ‘accepts’ a foreign text. (2) From this point onwards, the Holy Marriage is part of that language community’s common life – it establishes a set of agreed correspondences between source and target languages, which find themselves enshrined in lexica, dictionary and commentary – in an entire interpretive community. (3) Theoretical explanation for these correspondences is sought, and found in concepts such as ‘functional equivalence’. (4) Once this theoretical framework is established, it becomes possible to produce new versions of the **iĉroj ganoj**, which can be shown to be (more or less – there is scope for argument within the community) ‘functionally

1 Steiner, 1975, p.312ff.

2 Goodwin, 2010, p.5ff.

equivalent' to it. In this way the Holy Marriage behaves like a particularly successful meme – it spreads through the entire language community like a virus, seizing control of important neural pathways in the process.<sup>1</sup> Most effectively, even when a 'carrier' thinks he or she is producing a new version of the text, it turns out to be just another successful mutation of that interpretation. It becomes impossible for a language user to challenge this dominant interpretation. It is important to note in passing here, that I am not advocating any foolish conspiracy theory: there is no villain to accuse of 'suppression' of rival interpretations. As we saw in the Introduction, official, institutional anxiety about translation reached its peak in the period up to production of the Holy Marriage, and subsided rapidly thereafter. It is in the nature of viral infection to spread all on its own; there is no need for a guiding hand.

Nor, in using the language of 'infection', do I intend to suggest that there was something wrong with the **ićroj ganoj**; that it is a 'mistranslation', for example. The latter is a questionable term in any event, on all sorts of grounds. The Holy Marriage – the KJV – was a masterful act of interpretation. In the world of the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century, it represented a wonderful, relevant, resonant and coherent interpretation of the biblical writings. To be sure, it was mandated and given the authority of the newly created 'United Kingdom', but this would not have been enough, on its own, to give it the long-standing authority it achieved; that came from its inherent quality.<sup>2</sup> The problem with the **ićroj ganoj** is only that it prevents further acts of interpretation. Even that is not inevitable, but is a product of – to use the overtly religious language of Rosenzweig – an idolatrous relationship to the translation.

'What, then, shall we say to these things?' The drift of my argument, even if it is accepted, may of course be such as to lead to despair: the Holy Marriage cannot be challenged. We are all its heirs, and we must quietly

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1 I use here the language of 'memetics', given its most definitive form by Susan Blakmore, 1999. However, another expression of the same idea can be found in Steiner, 1975 – it is the purpose of translation to 'infect' the host community with a prophetic 'word' from the other. See p.427ff.

2 The caveat we must make to this statement is that which by now will be obvious. C.S Lewis expressed 'the extreme uncertainty of our literary judgement' when approaching the KJV, precisely because the Authorised Version was so familiar, and had so many 'unfair' advantages, such as being the text used for Handel's Messiah. 'What chance has Coverdale's second rendering (in the Geneva Bible) with us, against the familiarity of the Geneva adopted by the Authorised and most unfairly backed by Handel? A man would need to unmake himself before he was an impartial critic on such a point.' (Lewis, 1954, p.211).

submit. Like all demons, though, it is much less powerful once it is named. Once we acknowledge its presence and name it, we can move on to deciding how to deal with it. One way to tackle the beast would, of course, be to simply try to produce a new translation which was not in its sway. We could, like Sir Gawain, ignore the remains of all the brave Knights who have previously come this way and arrived at the same sticky end: we could turn a blind eye to the fact that many of those who, in embarking on their work, have hubristically declared that they are going to produce a 'new' or a 'fresh' or a 'restored' translation, only to find themselves having spawned a monstrous semblance to the **ićroj ganoj**.

The problem with such attempts is that, unless the theoretical ground of the argument is somehow shifted, the Holy Marriage is going to win, every time. It will win either by swaying the translator to produce another version of itself or, simply, by showing the translator to be 'wrong'.

Our intuitions, in other words, have been determined by the **ićroj ganoj**. The present work seeks to escape this bind by shifting the theoretical ground of debate. Whilst we are still thinking in terms of 'equivalence', be it 'functional equivalence', 'dynamic equivalence', or some other formulation, we will find it difficult to challenge the holy marriage translation and will remain on the tramlines. Only by moving to a more hermeneutic model will it be possible to re-interpret the text and with that re-interpretation produce a genuinely new translation.

We noted earlier the problems in applying the insights of hermeneutics to translation. All of this is changing, however, with the development of Relevance Theory, to which we will now turn. The reason that Relevance Theory is so exciting in the field of translation is that it represents a fusion of approaches. Its positive engagement with contextual issues, and particularly its conception of communication as the enlargement of shared context, means that it provides a genuinely hermeneutic foundation for translation theory. At the same time, though, and because it springs explicitly from Paul Grice's pragmatics, it is expressed in terms which are readily understandable within the Anglo-Saxon tradition which is so important to English translation.

In 1990 Ernst-August Gutt published the first rigorous exposition of what we will call the Relevance Theory of Translation (RTT). His contribution has been followed by several other positive engagements, and is actively in use in some biblical translation projects.<sup>1</sup> The reasons why I regard this as a tremendously positive development will be apparent from the exposition of the theory which follows.

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1 See for example, Wendland, 1996; Green and Turner, 2000; Green, 2002; Hill, 2006; Brown 2007; and especially Wendland, 2008.