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EMPHASIS AND ADVOCACY IN ANNOTATING AND TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

ABSTRACT

The past decades have seen several editions of the Bible with distinct emphases. Examples of such special-audience editions of the Bible are particularly aimed at women, men or young people. There are also particular "Bibles", or parts thereof, for bikers, for instance, or a Bible edition that highlights verses concerning issues of justice. The vast majority of these Bible editions, which try to address a particular audience or promote/advocate a certain cause, offer their particular emphases in the text and notes in the margins, but do not actually interfere with the text itself. However, there are also editions of the Bible, where the editors/translators introduce particular emphases in their actual rendering of the biblical text itself. The Complete Jewish Bible is one of the examples to be discussed in some detail in this instance. This article describes these approaches and assesses their validity.

1. INTRODUCTION

A recent brief glance at a Christian bookstore in Johannesburg led to the following impressive list of Bible editions, which include far more than the mere biblical text:

The Disciple's Study Bible
Africa Study Bible
She Reads Truth Bible
The Reformation Study Bible
Systematic Theology Study Bible

Gospel Transformation Bible
NKJV The Faithlife Illustrated Study Bible
The NIV Bible for Men
The Women's Study Bible
The NIV Devotional Bible for Single Women
NIV Beautiful World Bible
NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible
NIV Bible for Women
Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible
The Study Bible for Women
Life Application Study Bible
McArthur Study Bible
The Mission of God Study Bible
The Love Languages Devotional Bible with Relationship Insights from Gary Chapman

These and other editions combine the biblical text with all kinds of additions for devotional use.

This article mainly focuses on editions in English, as the language that – for better or worse – offers most of those Bible editions, due to the large number of native speakers or people able to read English, the comparatively high rate of Bible readers in the English-speaking world, and – closely linked to it – the high number of national Bible societies, publishing houses or other bodies that produce a constant stream of Bible editions to supply the needs of the faithful and of those who live off satisfying those needs.

How is this plethora of editions to be classified and assessed? What are some of the implications of these editions? Answers to such questions are part of the larger quest for the assessment of Bible translations, translations in general, and the criteria to be used in such quests. Reiss' (2000) slim volume, *Translation criticism – The potentials and limitations: Categories and criteria for translation quality assessment*, still offers sound guidance. She distinguishes between criteria to be applied in the criticism of the target language text of a translation and criteria to determine its relationship to the source language. She describes linguistic components such as semantic elements to be examined for equivalence, lexical elements for adequacy, grammatical elements for correctness, and stylistic elements for correspondence (Reiss 2000:48-66), as well as extra-linguistic determinants such as the immediate situation, the subject matter, the time factor, the place factor, the audience factor, the speaker factor, and the affective implications

of texts and translations (Reiss 2000:66-87).[1] Reiss emphasises that anyone assessing Bible translations must also be aware of the limitations of translation criticism. She distinguishes objective and subjective limits of translation criticism, underscores the special function of translation and the challenges of translations with regard to specially targeted reader groups. In closing, she stresses the subjective limits of translation criticism: the hermeneutical process as subjectively conditioned, the personality of the translator, and the personal category of translation criticism (Reiss 2000:106-113).[2] In her instructive section on Bible translations, Reiss (2000:95-98) stresses that translators need to be clear about the purpose of their translation, as this affects the translation methods to be employed. Therefore, "[a]n evaluation can be objective, only if the critic takes into consideration the function intended by the author" (Reiss 2000:97). Any determination of purpose must respect the character of the Bible as a sacred text (Reiss 2000:97).

Bible editions usually fall within three categories, each with its own subcategories. This article emphasises the third category, namely *editions that aim at emphasis and advocacy through fresh translations/adaptations of the biblical text*. Only a selection of examples in each category will be provided.

2. MERE TEXT AND SUPPLEMENTED EDITIONS OF STANDARD TRANSLATIONS

This heading comprises four subcategories.

2.1 The "plain" presentation of the text

Perhaps with an introduction to the origin and approach of the particular Bible translation, such as the standard edition of the *Common English Bible* (*CEB*) (2011).[3]

1 See also the categories developed by Nord (1991). Her factor "Effect" (1991:130-140; following her discussion of nine extra-textual and nine intra-textual factors, 39-130) of the factors of source-text analysis applies, in particular to our category 4.c., where translators aim at conveying the otherness of the biblical texts. Nord (1991:63-67) rightly emphasises the relevance of considering the time of communication in translation endeavours and discusses the options available to translators.

2 Reiss (2000:114) notes that "[b]ecause the critic is also inevitably susceptible to the same influences, a personal category of translation criticism becomes an overruling component".

3 The *CEB* seeks to combine "rigorous accuracy in the rendition of ancient texts with an equally passionate commitment to clarity of expression in the target language" (Preface); see www.CommonEnglishBible.com [20 January 2021). The *CEB* comes in different editions.

2.2 Bible editions are often aimed at a particular group of readers

Bible editions, with a special introductory section, are often aimed at a particular group of readers. For instance, the *Biker Bible* is aimed at motorcyclists and available in 23 languages.[4] *The Metal Bible* contains the entire New Testament and 128 pages with testimonies, interviews and statements.[5] Such editions, often driven by evangelistic intentions, try to point out the relevance of the Bible/Christian faith for specific groups of readers. Beyond introductory texts, at the beginning or the end, the readers are left with the biblical text as it stands, usually in one of the standard translations.

2.3 Study Bibles

The endless editions of so-called study Bibles aim to explain the biblical text with information added in introductory essays, at the beginning and/or the end, and/or interspersed in the biblical text, or in the form of footnotes. The approach is usually that of academic biblical studies and the focus is historical, on the "then and there" of the text. A representative example is Metzger and Murphy's (1991) *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books*. Such study Bibles are often written with the support of biblical scholars and projected as ecumenical projects to ensure that the introductory essays, explanatory notes and other additions find wide acceptance and are not openly biased.

2.4 Study Bibles with a pronounced focus on application

Some study Bibles have a pronounced focus on *application*, either general or for particular groups of readers such as women or men. An example is the *NIV Life Application Study Bible* (2015) or one of the editions mentioned earlier.

3. EMPHASIS OR ADVOCACY EDITIONS IN COMBINATION WITH STANDARD TRANSLATIONS

Some editions of the Bible explicitly aim at viewing the biblical text through a particular lens and note or emphasise, in their additions to the biblical text, what becomes (or should become) apparent when this particular lens is employed.

4 See https://www.bible-for-the-nations.com/en/bibles-en/the-biker-bible.

5 See https://www.bible-for-the-nations.com/en/shop/metal-bible/metal-bible-new-testament-english-de.

3.1 Study Bibles with a theological emphasis

A number of study Bibles have a distinct and pronounced theological emphasis, such as the *Scofield Reference Bible*, with its dispensationalist commentary, which has appeared in several editions since 1909,[6] or *The Orthodox Study Bible: Ancient Christianity Speaks to Today's World* (2008).

An interesting example in this category is *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (2017). The text is that of the NRSV. The volume offers introductory essays to the "Gospels and Acts" (1-8), and to the "Epistles and Revelation" (281-284), introductions and annotations from a Jewish perspective on each New Testament book, and eighty-eight short "in-text essays" on a wide variety of subjects. After the annotated text of the New Testament, the volume contains two hundred pages of longer essays (579-767) on history, social issues, Jewish movements in the New Testament period, the relations of Jews and Gentiles, religious practice, religious belief, literature,[7] and, in closing, twelve essays on Jewish responses to the New Testament, which evaluate the New Testament and its reception history from a Jewish perspective.

3.2 Bible editions emphasising something distinct and important

Other Bible editions, in this category, do not provide a running "commentary" of some kind or from a particular perspective, but aim to emphasise something distinct and important in the Bible – often something that is deemed to have been neglected in the past and present. Their approach may be described as that of *advocacy*, understood as public support for, or recommendation of a particular cause or policy. This is achieved through one or several introductory essays and/or by directly highlighting the occurrences of the identified concern in the biblical text. A representative recent example is *The Poverty and Justice Bible* (Holt 2009). It combines a three-page introductory "Foreword" to put the emphasis on issues of poverty and justice, the biblical text in the *Contemporary English Version* (of the American Bible Society, presumably with the standard twenty-seven pages of helpful introductory additions to this translation), and – in the biblical text, right in the middle of the volume, between Proverbs 19:13a and 13b – a section entitled "The core: Reflect and respond". Curiously, this section is identified as the "core". Throughout the biblical text, verses or several verses are printed, as if highlighted by hand with a reddish text marker pen, to indicate where and – presumably – to demonstrate how often the Bible

6 C.R. Scofield edited the first edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909). In my research, I saw the 1967 edition, edited by E.S. English *et al*.; for an assessment, see Mangum & Sweetnam (2009).

7 For example, Seidman (2017:699-703).

emphasises issues of poverty and justice – in contrast to the vast majority of Christian readers of the Bible!

Despite their different forms and approaches, all of these editions have in common that they use one of the standard translations, which suits their particular concerns (an analysis of the pairing of particular concerns, with particular translations, would be an interesting study of itself), and which is printed without alterations.

4. EMPHASIS AND ADVOCACY THROUGH FRESH TRANSLATIONS AND/OR ADAPTATIONS OF THE TEXT

However, there is also another approach, where a distinct emphasis or advocacy of certain causes is not (only) indicated by introductions, comments in the margins or in footnotes, essays included somewhere in the volume, or by highlighting in the actual text of some kind, but by *introducing* and *including* the chosen emphasis in a fresh translation. Commonly, the editors/translators of such Bibles would insist that they are far from introducing something *alien* into the biblical text that is not there in the original languages. Rather, they would claim that they are merely emphasising and re-discovering something that has always been there, in the original languages (or in the cultural background of the Bible), but that has been neglected or, even worse, deliberately suppressed for whatever reasons. Such projects usually fall into one of the following three categories.

4.1 Bible translations with a distinct ecclesial/confessional origin and emphasis

While some translations in this category are widely accepted nowadays as reliable translations of the biblical text, some of them have their origin in distinct church traditions or stood at their beginning and, for a long time, bore vestiges of this origin. In some cases, these origins are still discernible. One example is Luther's translation of 1534. For instance, to his translation of Romans 3:28, he added an "allein/alone", which is not in the Greek text, to emphasise that justification is by faith alone. Luther had to justify this addition to his critics in his *Open Letter on Translating*, written in the year 1530.[8] After a survey of such changes, Cameron (2016:226-227) suggests that Luther's translation

8 For a recent assessment, see Cameron (2016:225-234). Cameron's (2016:228-234) next section is entitled "Luther's prefaces: The translator as biblical critic".

> consciously and deliberately evoked his theological insights and claims. … [Luther] may have believed so passionately that he understood the mind of Paul that he might not even have considered these to be modifications of the text.

A major interference was Luther's re-arrangement of the traditional order of the books of the New Testament and leaving Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation unnumbered, unlike the rest of the New Testament (Cameron 2016:227-228).

4.2 Bible translations sensitive to changes in receptor languages and issues in wider society

This category includes editions of the Bible, which have adapted the biblical text to current language conventions, most commonly Bible translations that use inclusive language throughout. While a case for some changes, on the basis of Greek grammar, can be argued, other changes are questionable, such as when Greek "brothers" simply become gender-neutral "friends" or when singular terms are rendered in plural forms. An example is the NRSV (1989). More explicit and radical are the changes made by *The inclusive Bible: The first egalitarian translation*, published by the Roman Catholic organisation, *Priests for Equality*. This endeavour and the changes it introduced in several recent translations are disputed, as can be noted by the different approach of the *English Standard Version*, with its deliberate emphasis on the exact rendering of the original, even in the area of gendered language.

While the motivations for such translations are beyond questioning, we could argue that they constitute cases of what Reiss (2000:105) classifies as "moral, religious, ideological and commercial censorship". By this, she refers to

> adaptive translations (adaptations, revisions), where the foreign original is "purified" for its readers in conformity with certain moral, religious or ideological sensitivities, convictions or values. … The translator's modifications of the original, whether by expansions, euphemisms, attenuations or omissions, are invariably intended to purify or cleanse the original in the interests of a particular group of readers. Anything in the original, which might offend the moral code, the religious feelings or the ideological position of the intended readers, is eliminated; texts may even be altered, when necessary, and supplementary material added to accommodate the readers.

4.3 Bible translations (and Bible editions), with the explicit aim of restoring or indicating the "original character" of the Bible

It could be argued that this third category is but a subcategory of the first category, "Bibles with a distinct ecclesial/confessional origin and emphasis", as many of the translators and editors of such Bibles would probably make the same claim. However, not all such projects are driven by ecclesial or Christian agendas.

It needs to be noted that translators can afford to take this approach, because they can assume that their readers are familiar with the subject and motivated to read, otherwise this approach would backfire, as

> a strange subject might require concentration or arouse dislike or merely disinterest, etc. The stranger the subject, the more likely it will be that the recipient reacts uncomprehendingly and is unwilling to continue reading. This aspect is of particular importance to the translator, for if he wants to rouse the recipient's interest in a strange subject, he may have to build a bridge, using a familiar subject, in order to facilitate access to alien worlds (Nord 1991:133).

In this category, there are also three recent Jewish Bible translations,[9] which combine fresh translations with the explicit aim of restoring or indicating the "original character" of the Bible.

Fox has translated and annotated the *Schocken Bible in two volumes. Volume one: The five books of Moses: A new translation with introductions, commentary and notes. Volume two: The early prophets: A new translation with introductions, commentary and notes*. Fox (1995:ix) offers an extensive introduction to his translation, in which he states:

> The purpose of this work is to draw the reader into the world of the Hebrew Bible through the power of its language. While this sounds simple enough, it is not usually possible in translation. Indeed, the premise of almost all Bible translations, past and present, is that the "meaning" of the text should be conveyed in as clear and comfortable a manner as possible, in one's own language. Yet, the truth is that the Bible was not written in English in the twentieth or even seventeenth century; it is ancient, sometimes obscure, and speaks in a way quite

9 For a full survey, see Levenson's (2011:181-207) chapter "Seeking an American Jewish Bible". Another recent study of Jewish Bible translation is that of Benjamin (2015). Benjamin (2015:103-170) examines Rosenzweig's attempt to provide a Jewish translation of the Old Testament into German in the context of German-Jewish identity. On Rosenzweig and Buber' translation, see Levenson (2011:81-94). See also Attias' broader survey (2015).

> different from ours. Accordingly, I have sought, therefore, primarily to echo the style of the original, believing that the Bible is best approached, at least at the beginning, on its own terms. So, I have presented the text in English dress, but with a Hebraic voice.

In 2019, Alter published *The Hebrew Bible: A translation and commentary. Volumes 1-3*.[10] Parts of this enterprise had appeared earlier on (Alter 2004). Regarding the approach of Alter's earlier volume, Levenson (2011:177) writes:

> 'Explaining the text', as Alter comments in the introduction to *The Five Books of Moses*, constitutes the heresy par excellence when it comes to translation. The temptation to use translation to explain is understandable: the nature of the text cries out for understanding, yet the biblical Hebrew is difficult and resistant to easy conversion into English that is both straightforward and elevated.[11]

In this case, such much acclaimed attempts raise the issue of intentional vs non-intentional effect of the text and/or its translation, as discussed by Nord (1991:136), who notes that the effect produced by the text or translation is, in fact, the effect intended by the sender, that is, the author, or that "the text produces an effect which does not conform to the sender's intention". Did the biblical authors aim at the effects endeavoured by Fox and Alter or do their translations produce effects that do not conform and might even undermine the effect aimed by the authors?[12]

Both translations raise interesting questions with regard to our classification. It would be a mistake to simply classify them as *confessional* (see above), because they were done by Jews.[13]

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10 On Alter's approach, see Levenson (2011:172-180) and Alter's *The art of Bible translation* (2019b).

11 With regard to the Buber-Rosenzweig translation, Levenson notes that it "kept the difficult and the strange intact, principally through their 'Hebraizing' techniques". Levenson also refers to Alter's plea that the biblical text must not be denuded of its "indeterminacy and multivalence and, one may say, its mystery".

12 For example, Fox (1995/2014:ix) writes, in his preface, with regard to his translation: "The result looks and sounds very different from what we are accustomed to encountering as the Bible, whether in the much-loved grandeur of the *KJV* or the clarity and easy fluency of the many recent attempts. There are no old friends here; Eve will not, as in old paintings, give Adam an apple (nor will she be called "Eve"), nor will Moses speak of himself as "a stranger in a strange land," as beautiful as that sounds. Instead, the reader will encounter a text which challenges him or her to rethink what these ancient books are and what they mean, and will, hopefully, be encouraged to become an active listener rather than a passive receiver."

13 "Confessional" is not a helpful category with regard to Judaism; translations by Christians are not necessarily "confessional".

A radical example of this approach is the Messianic-Jewish *Complete Jewish Study Bible: Insights for Jews and Christians – Illuminating the Jewishness of God's Word* (2016), which aims at restoring the original Jewish character of the entire Bible, as the subtitle indicates. It uses Stern's translation, *The Complete Jewish Bible* (1998) as its text. We start with Stern's own account for this translation, in his "Introduction to the *CJB*" (2016:xxiii-xxviii; on translation xxiii-xxviii) and explore some examples. Stern's translation

> *aims to restore the unified Jewishness of the Bible and to show that the books of the New Testament are Jewish through and through*, to express the word of God in enjoyable modern English and to provide a text usable for Messianic synagogues.
>
> Even its title, the *Complete Jewish Bible*, challenges both Jews and Christians to see that the whole Bible is Jewish, the *B'rit Hadashah* as well as the *Tanakh*. Jews are challenged by the implication that, without it, the *Tanakh* is an incomplete Bible. Christians are challenged by the fact that they are joined to the Jewish people through faith in the Jewish Messiah, *Yeshua* (Jesus) – so that because Christianity can be rightly understood only from a Jewish perspective, anti-Semitism is condemned absolutely and forever. In short, *The Complete Jewish Bible* restores the Jewish unity of the Bible (Stern 2016:xxiii).

Stern briefly sketches the origin for the *CJB* (2016:xxiii-xxv), provides general comments on Bible translation (2016:xxv-xxvi), and describes his intentions, as expressed earlier (2016:xxvi). This is followed by a discussion of the "three philosophical points raised in translation work that need to be addressed", that is

> formal versus dynamic equivalence ('literal translations' versus 'paraphrases'), (2) the degree to which a translator's interpretation of a text's meaning should be reflected in his translation, and (3) the pluses and minuses of a version produced by a single individual versus one produced by a translation team (Stern 2016:xxvi).

By Stern's (2016:xxvii) own estimate, *The Complete Jewish Bible* "tends towards the dynamically equivalent end of the scale":

> And at certain points, especially related to Jewish issues, the New Covenant portion becomes militantly so. For example, the Greek phrase *upo nomon* (literally, 'under law') is usually rendered 'under the law'. But, because this phrase has become a buzzword in anti-Torah Christian theology, the *Jewish New Testament* and now the *CJB* spell out the meaning of these two Greek words in thirteen English words: 'in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism' (Stern 2016:xxvii).

In Stern's (2016:xxvii-xxviii) ensuing section, reflecting on "The translator and his interpretations", he (2016:xxvii) argues that translators should

> decide what a word or phrase means – in their opinion – and then convey that meaning as clearly as possible. For example, in the case of *upo nomon* …, precisely because wrong meanings have been conveyed in the past, I consider it my responsibility to convey what I believe to be the one and only correct meaning in as unmistakable a way as possible. Even when an expression in the original language seems vague, capable of more than one interpretation, I don't think translators should transfer the ambiguity into English. Rather, they should decide on one of the possible interpretations and render that one well.

Stern (2016:xlvii-xlix) goes to some length to emphasise the Jewishness of the New Testament. His translation was needed, as it was "the first to express fully the New Testament's original and essential Jewishness". His verdict is clear:

> nearly all the other English translations of the New Testament present its message in a Gentile-Christian linguistic, cultural, and theological framework (Stern 2016:xliv).

> For the New Testament is, in fact, a Jewish book – by Jews, mostly about Jews, and for Jews as well as Gentiles. It is all very well to adapt a Jewish book for easier appreciation by non-Jews, but not at the cost of suppressing its inherent Jewishness. … Indeed, … the *B'rit Hadashah* completes the *Tanakh*; so that the New Testament, without the Old, is as impossible, as the second floor of a house without the first, and the Old without the New, as unfinished as a house without a roof (Stern 2016:xliv-xlv).

According to Stern, much in the New Testament is incomprehensible, apart from this Jewish background. A translation that emphasises the Jewishness of the New Testament also serves to counter Christian anti-Semitism, Jewish failure to receive the gospel, and the split between the church and the Jewish people (Stern 2016:xlv-xlvi).

Stern (2016:xlvii) intends to bring out the Jewishness of the New Testament in three overlapping ways: cosmetically (or superficially), culturally and religiously, as well as theologically:

1. *Cosmetically*. Cosmetic changes from the usual renderings are the most frequent and obvious. The names "Jesus", "John", "James", and "Peter" never appear; only "Yeshua", "Yochanan", "Ya'akov", and "Kefa". The terms "immersion", "emissary", "execution-stake", and "Messianic Community"

(or "congregation") replace "baptism", "apostle", "cross", and "church". Semitic terms that belong to "Jewish English" (see below) substitute for certain English words: for example, *talmid* instead of "disciple", and "do *tzedakah*" instead of "give to charity".

2. *Culturally and religiously*. Cultural-religious changes strengthen the reader's awareness of the Jewish cultural or religious context, in which events of the *B'rit Hadashah* took place.

3. *Theologically*. Theological changes are the most penetrating, since New Testament translating has been thoroughly permeated by Gentile Christian theologies that de-emphasise the Jews as still God's people, the Torah as still valid, and God as still One.[14]

As examples of his approach, Stern (2016:xliv) explains some of his controversial renderings in the New Testament and outlines their theological implications: "Did Yeshua 'fill' or 'fulfil' the Torah?"; "Binding and loosing: Who has the authority to determine Halakhah?"; "Does the Messiah bring the Torah to an end, or is he its goal?"; "The New Testament has been given as Torah", and "'Works of the Law' and 'Under the Law': Is the Torah legalistic?"

At times, the line between drawing out what is or may be implied in a text and reading into the text becomes blurry, for example, when Colossians appears as "The Letter from Yeshua's Emissary Sha'ul (Paul) to the Messianic Community in Colossae" (Stern 2016:1694).

5. EVALUATION

It is not possible to evaluate all such attempts, their presuppositions and pitfalls. After briefly presenting general reflections on the types of Bible editions, mentioned in the introduction, the article focuses on the last group of Bible editions, that is, emphasis and advocacy within the translation.

5.1 General observations

It is welcome that editors and publishers attempt to present the biblical text in manifold attractive formats and with additional texts/material that bring out its usefulness of people from all walks of life. Most of the additions to the biblical text are commendable, as they intend to help people understand.

It is welcome, when issues and aspects in biblical texts, which have been neglected or which appear particularly crucial in our day and age, are stressed, as it happens, for instance, in *The poverty and justice Bible*.

14 Stern charges Christian translations with theologically motivated censorship (see Reiss 2000:105); however, it could be argued that the same charge also applies to his own endeavour.

In some cases, it may be difficult or even impossible to draw the fine line between legitimate advocacy of something deeply biblical and inclusion of other issues or agendas. Moreover, every emphasis highlights certain aspects at the expense of others. While there is no doubt about the biblical concern with overcoming poverty and ensuring justice, this is not the only concern or a concern that can only be addressed properly on the basis of other issues. What does the highlighting of some passages imply about the others?

Importantly, what do Bible editorial teams and publishers imply – perhaps with hardly any reflection – by doing so?

- Does the Bible have a message or agenda of its own, which its readers ought to hear and follow and which needs to be brought out and emphasised by special editions such as the *Green Bible*, or do we bring our agendas to the Bible? Is the Bible of value and relevant to modern readers only when and where it meets their immediate interests or needs? However, we may ask whether the readers of the Bible have not always been prone to approach the Bible in this way.
- However, with all their introductions, notes, comments, illustrations and photographs, and whatever else may be added to the biblical text in various editions, the editors and publishers also implicitly indicate that the plain text of the Bible is difficult to understand or can hardly be understood properly on its own – why would it be published in this format otherwise? At first sight, such additions question the Reformation concept of the clarity of Scripture. The word of God was to have priority over all human attempts to explain and interpret it. To this assertion, we may respond that the *claritas Scripturae* has been more of a claim and – at times – a polemical concept than reality. Some of the very people who argued this case against Roman-Catholic doctrine also provided their own prefaces to the Bible, parts of it or individual books thereof, indicating just *how* those clear Scriptures are to be read, if they are to be understood "properly".
- At second sight, there is probably no way around accepting that the vast majority of actual readers of the Bible or potential readers need all the assistance they can get for understanding books that are millennia old and come from worlds very different to the ones in which they live. This is all the more so when the systematic exposition of Scripture and regular Bible study groups, in many congregations, are decreasing rather than increasing. Acts 8:26-39 suggests that the Ethiopian Eunuch would have benefitted from a study Bible with annotations, although a Jewish edition would likely have led him to different conclusions than a Christian edition!
- Is there the danger that all the introductions, notes and whatever else is added, end up distracting rather than informing the readers? What

happens when the distinction between all additions (however well intended and spiritually edifying) and the biblical text itself becomes blurred? What happens if readers end up finding the commentaries, notes and additions more meaningful and attractive than the ancient texts?

- What happens if essays (the author(s) not identified), entitled "The Core: Reflect and Respond", (helpful as they are!) appear in the middle of the Bible edition, between pages 542 and 543, as is the case in *The poverty and justice Bible*? This arrangement is not explained at the beginning of the volume. Is this (non-canonical) addition and emphasis of a certain biblical aspect the "core" of Scripture for many readers of God's word?

5.2 Bible editions that introduce and include their chosen emphasis in fresh translations

What are the implications of Bible translations with *a recognisable emphasis and advocacy*? Obviously, no translation is entirely free from emphasis, advocacy and bias, even when and where measures are taken to prevent this. The focus is now on editions of the Bible, where emphases appear within the translation of the biblical text. While there is some consensus nowadays (at least at the level of national Bible societies) that ecclesial concerns and dogmatic positions are not to bear on translations of the biblical text (our first category), it is disputed whether and how the actual text *may be* or even *has to be* altered, in order to reflect contemporary concerns such as inclusive language.

We return to *The Complete Jewish Bible*. As noted earlier, this translation goes a step further, by emphasising the Jewish character of the New Testament. The cosmetic, religious, as well as cultural and theological changes, which the translator indicates, justifies and defends, provide an interesting case study. Stern introduces significant changes, is explicit about them, and argues their validity in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*.

The "cosmetic changes" such as transliterations of names closer to the original languages may help remind readers of the "strangeness" of the biblical texts.

The price to pay is some confusion with regard to names. In addition, a measure of inconsistency and direct interferences can hardly be avoided. In some cases, the exact Greek text is not transliterated: Greek Ἰωάννης becomes *Yochanan*, which is inaccurate, as is the common translation with "John". Greek Ἰωανάν (which should be *Ioanan*) only appears once in Luke's genealogy of Jesus (3:27); all one hundred and thirty-five other references are to Ἰωάννης. Certainly, Paul would not have forgotten his Jewish name *Sha'ul*. While it appears in Hellenised form as Σαῦλος in Acts, Paul never uses his

Jewish name in his own letters. Do translators have the freedom to simply change what Saul/Paul may have done deliberately from a certain stage onwards when addressing his predominantly Gentile Christian audiences? Is Paul turned, in this manner, into something he himself – for some reason – did not want to emphasise (at least not by using his Jewish name)? For Paul, his Jewish identity was apparently not tied to as exact a transliteration as possible of his Jewish name.[15] Was he more relaxed about different names, in different cultural contexts, than his interpreters? What would we do in cases where a Jewish "version" of the name of a Jewish person with a Greek name does not exist or is unclear to determine, such as, for example, the Apollos of Acts 18:24?

More complex is the observation that many words and expressions in New Testament Greek are influenced by the LXX. Thus, efforts to make the New Testament more Jewish again raise the issue of the task and validity of assessing and perhaps *reversing* developments in early Judaism from the 3rd century BC onwards, some of them due to the diaspora situation and the various theological challenges it called for.

However, if done with care and moderation, such changes are a helpful reminder that the New Testament was, to start with, not a Christian book in the later sense of the word and comes from a world much different than ours. As Stern (2016:xlvii) writes:

> Many of these alterations replace 'church language', in which buzzwords produce automatic responses, with neutral terminology that encourages the reader to think.

In addition, it is noteworthy, in this context, that the New Testament authors themselves include several key words, for instance, words of Jesus or key words in early Christian worship such as *Maranatha*, in Aramaic, in their narratives and letters (at times with translation into Greek). In addition to whatever other functions they serve, we could argue that these words point to the original Jewish cultural milieu of Jesus and the first followers of Christ.

15 It might be argued that this is, in the words of Reiss (2000:105), a case of "falsification of the original text, because in the target language version the aim of the translator or his client is not that of the original author and may be possibly one from which the author would have distanced himself". It needs to be said, in Stern's defence, that he clearly describes his approach and, in doing so, fulfils Reiss' plea that it should be the obvious responsibility of the translator "to disclose the nature of the work as an adaptation, a revision or an adaptive translation. The translator should do this for his own protection against possible charges of incompetence, carelessness or stupidity". Stern gives "the reviewer or critic some clue as to how it should be reviewed, objectively and functionally".

With *religious and cultural changes*, Stern (2016) attempts to restore the original setting, which is not adequately captured by translations or the original biblical text. In some cases, a Greek word such as μαθητής, traditionally "disciple", does not become "learners" (which would closely reflect the Greek meaning), but *talmidim*. Does this emphasis and choice of word really help readers understand the concept of following Jesus and, if so, *which* readers? While many readers will have some idea of what could be meant by disciples, *talmidim* surely needs explanation. Would all readers with a Jewish background know? In addition, does the present understanding of *talmidim* (which of perhaps several understandings of the term?) adequately capture what is meant in the New Testament? Were the disciples of Jesus ever students of Jewish traditions? Is the close semantic proximity to Talmud helpful or perhaps confusing?

With the best of intentions, information without basis in the manuscript tradition is added to assist the modern reader and to provide what the first readers presumably would (or should) have known or how they would have understood the text. In some cases, such changes cross the line between translation/paraphrase and commentary. However, before this is criticised too harshly, it should be noted that the authors of biblical narratives have often also added information to their texts, which readers may need, in order to adequately understand what is happening in their narratives and why.[16] However, the presence of such explanations, in canonical texts, does not imply that later translators and editors have the same liberty or even obligation to do so.

Such religious and cultural changes raise a foundational issue behind all three of Stern's changes. The authors of the New Testament themselves have, at least to some extent, transposed and presented the original, thoroughly Jewish message of Jesus and the apostles in the language, and also *notions*, understandable to the wider Hellenistic world (of which obviously early Judaism was a non-extricable part!) – though much of this process was well on its way long before the first New Testament pen met paper and ink. This begs the question: Are their translators called and entitled to reverse this process and make their texts Jewish or more Jewish again? Where do we start and where do we stop?

Deliberate *theological* changes are the most challenging, as Stern (2016:xlvii) admits:

> Theological changes are the most penetrating, since New Testament translating has been thoroughly permeated by Gentile Christian

16 See Stenschke (2013:214-239).

> theologies that de-emphasise the Jews as still God's people, the Torah as still valid, and God as still One.

These are indeed severe charges. While a preface is not the place to argue a detailed case, we wonder what examples Stern would adduce for each of these three and, presumably, other points.

The issues surrounding the New Testament statements on Jews as God's people and the role of the Jewish Law are highly complex and cannot be addressed in this article. Again, in some cases, Stern's (2016) translation leaves the impression that something is stressed that the New Testament authors did not stress or stress to this extent. Where is the line between bringing out the actual meaning of the text (which perhaps requires some paraphrasing), mending problematic aspects in the reception history of certain texts or wider issues in the history of theology, and openly correcting the text in a pro-Jewish (or whatever else pro-) perspective?

And then the question is, pro – *which* Judaism? Which form of ancient or current Judaism*s* or Messianic Judaism*s*? Stern's (2016:xxxvii) own example involves not only a fair amount of paraphrase, but indicates a clear agenda:

> The Greek phrase, *upo nomon* (literally, 'under law'), is usually rendered 'under the law'. But, because this phrase has become a buzzword in anti-Torah Christian theology, the *Jewish New Testament* and now the *CJB* spell out the meaning of these two Greek words in thirteen English words: 'in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism'.

Surely, there was and is something like an "anti-Torah Christian theology".[17] However, some of the Christian understanding or the Law, in all its variety, is based on statements in the very *Jewish* New Testament, which are more critical of the Law than some readers would allow. With all appreciation of the Law, for instance in Romans 7:12, 16, some statements limit the Law or question the abiding validity of some of its statements, at least for some people. Do real or alleged anti-Jewish or anti-Law tendencies in some Christian theology and translations justify "pro-Law corrections"? Behind most of these changes lie extensive exegetical debates.

Deliberate theological changes also raise the important issue of whether, in view of the manifold reception history, the biblical text can be or even must be rendered so as to exclude later misunderstandings or distortions. Obviously, the questions must be raised: Reception by whom? When and where? In what context? Can a text ever be "translated" in a way that excludes all past and current actual or potential misunderstandings? Can all ambiguities be

17 See the entries on "Law v. Christianity" (Scheck *et al.* 2017).

removed? How much do we have to rely on explanations of the written text? A striking example is the recent debate regarding the translation of *divine familial terms*. As each era reads the Bible in its own way, can we do anything else but to read the Bible in view of its almost two millennia of reception history and be specific about the specific Christian reception history that we have in view?

While Stern's approach emphasises the unity of the Old and the New Testament, we may also inquire about the unity of the church.[18] This not only applies to Stern's changes, but to all emphases that are included in the translations of the biblical text. Obviously, this also applies, to some extent, to the plethora of different Bible translations available in some languages. What actually is "the thing" when we are talking about the "Bible"? What about the unity of the church, when different groups of readers introduce their emphases and advocacy concerns in their versions of the one sacred text? Surely, Paul could speak about the unity of the church without mentioning the Bible, but does the one biblical text, faithfully translated from the original languages, not also constitute a significant bond of unity, at least from a Protestant perspective? When does the concept of the "one Bible" lose its validity and binding power?

6. EPILOGUE

This article surveyed some plants in the vast and blossoming field of Bible publishing and tried to highlight some tendencies and assess them. While there is much to appreciate and be thankful for, some developments are questionable. More reflection of what is actually done in translating and publishing "the Bible", in endless varieties and for different constituencies, is required. Are we assisting readers to understand (on their own terms) what is there or are we attempting to steer them to see what *we* see in the biblical texts and what they need to see in order "to get it right",[19] be that by *becoming* Christians, *becoming* champions of the fight against poverty and for justice or gender equality, or *becoming* aware of the Jewish roots of their faith, or *becoming* whatever else. In view of these "becoming(s)", we also need to reflect on what we are saying about ourselves and the intended audience when we embark on such endeavours.

18 This point touches on the implications of the different canons of Scripture in different ecclesial communities, for example, the question of the significance and role of the Old Testament apocrypha.

19 This also poses the question as to why certain editions of the Bible are presented as gifts to certain people. What are these people meant "to see" through this particular edition?

In addition, the sheer variety in the outer forms and formats of the Bible can be confusing. Can we really present the Bible in whatever form, or do forms have implications for the content, or do actual contents require certain forms? What about the content? Do the many editions of the Bible with their introductions, annotations, emphasis, and implicit or explicit advocacy of certain issues blur the concept of the one Bible? Will some people (now and in the future) not only sing nostalgically about the *old time religion*,[20] but also about *the old time Bible*, which was good for our mothers, saved our fathers, made us love everybody, would do when we are dying and take us all to heaven? However, things are and will likely not be that simple …

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20 Playing on the words of a traditional Gospel song dating from 1873; see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old-Time_Religion.

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