

## **The Nida Institute, Its History, Scholarly Focus, and the “Turn to Power” in Translation Studies**

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We would like to thank the Bible Society of Korea and the Institute for Biblical Text Research for hosting this collaborative research event. This Bible Society has a history and depth of fine biblical scholarship, and a keen interest in bringing this to bear on translation and translation scholarship. The Nida Institute shares your interests and aspires to attain this level of scholarship, in biblical studies and translation studies, and we trust this collaborative event will be the beginning of a partnership that will be mutually beneficial. Our contribution to the larger conversation of this conference will be partly a briefing on the Nida Institute’s history and historical origins in Eugene Nida. But we are less interested in biography and more interested in the way his work anticipated themes and trends that would affect translation scholars of all sort, including Bible translators. His work has made it possible for the Nida Institute to develop into a center of training and research that seeks to bring together Bible translation theory and the insights of the “poly-discipline” that has come to be called “translation studies”.

We will describe translation studies and its history in a moment, and we will unfold one of its current emphases by considering aspects of Eugene Nida’s theory and practice; but we want first to underscore the broad question that has stimulated the thinking of the Nida Institute and affected the way we think about Bible translation training: What, if anything, does the “poly-discipline” of translation studies, largely developed in secular university contexts by scholars quite allergic to anything related to the Bible, have to offer Bible translation? It is this question that we have now spent ten or more years considering, and we

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will eventually give you our answer and its implications for the way we do our work.

As we have considered the question and pursued research into translation studies, we are constantly finding ways in which Eugene Nida and key features of his program anticipated (or perhaps actively contributed to) nuances, developments, or “turns” in the development of translation studies.

There is one particular “turn” or “paradigm” still at work defining translation studies that we want to focus on: it is the so-called “power turn”. Then, we will consider some of its possible implications for Bible translation.

## **1. The “Power-Turn” in Translation Studies**

*Translation Studies* is a network of discourses whose scholarly conversation and definition have been evolving from the mid-twentieth century. It is partly the outgrowth of another, more widely known scholarly discipline called comparative literature, which of course made translations of literature a laboratory in which to observe trends and movements of literature (foreign literature) across cultures. Essentially, translation studies scholars took what was generally regarded to be a low-level, rather ordinary and rudimentary function (often regarded as “hack work”), a sort of necessary evil if there was to be commerce and communication between two cultures, and reassessed it as a cultural phenomenon: translation itself became an object of scholarly observation; and, as it turns out, a number of conclusions which would be drawn from translation studies scholars are proving to have a direct bearing on how we think of and perform translation of our Bible.

As in the case of many academic disciplines, as it has evolved, it has gone through a number of paradigm shifts, called by one scholar the various “turns” of direction taken by the growing discipline.<sup>1)</sup> After WWII, an interest in the possibilities of Machine Translation, because of the growing need of translation in a vastly changed European landscape, led to theoretical and practical developments that in the 70’s were called the Pragmatic Turn in translation studies, and in fact the issue of “need” or “market” in relation to translation

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1) M. Snell-Hornby, *The Turns of Translation Studies* (New York: John Benjamins, 2006).

actually allowed translation studies to assume the status of an academic discipline. In the 80's came the so-called Cultural Turn, within which translation came to be viewed as not simply a matter of the pragmatics of international life but as a cultural activity in its own right. During this period, several features of the cultural activity of translation emerged with clarity: Translation could be generally thought of as cultural transfer, the movement of value-laden information across cultural boundaries by the application of forces of "localization"; more recently translation is also being thought of as a form of human cognitive activity, and as a human condition. Translation occurs in all spaces of human life and communication.

Now, from the 90's on up to the present, we are in the midst of another of the "turns" identified by translation studies: the Power Turn.<sup>2)</sup> As especially identified by the postcolonial and feminist critiques, translation, along with whatever else it might be, has come to be understood equally and unavoidably as a means of exerting power—social power, cultural power, religious power, and cognitive power. Such critiques described translation in contexts of asymmetrical power relations and conditions of hegemony, and practices in which translation, controlled by those in power, has abetted subjugation. The resistant translations produced in response by the colonized or other oppressed classes in society were explorations in the application of power to bring their "otherness" to light. They would demonstrate that power is transacted and negotiated all across the translation activity, and that even those on the wrong side of asymmetrical relations demonstrated their own access to power in translation and writing, and in other spheres of cultural activity as well. How did this present power perspective come to prominence in translation studies?

The decisive focus on power, a gathering of tendencies that began to assert themselves in various fields of discourse from the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,

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2) See esp., M. Tymoczko and E. Gentzler, eds., *Translation and Power* (Amherst; Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002). Their identification of the "power turn" is frequently referenced in the literature. See, e.g., J. Munday, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, revised edition (London: Routledge, 2009), 216; S. Laviosa, "Translation", R. B. Kaplan, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 479; M. W.-K. Leung, "The ideological turn in Translation Studies", J. F. Duarte, A. A. Rosa, and T. Seruya, eds., *Translation Studies at the Interface of Disciplines* (Amsterdam: J. Benjamins, 2006), 138.

brought into the daylight by scholars such as M. Foucault<sup>3)</sup> and R. Barthes,<sup>4)</sup> is linked by some to an introductory essay by Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevre in which they exhorted translation studies scholars to enter the discussion about the exercise of power in culture “of which the production of translations is a part”.<sup>5)</sup> But the roots go back to the awareness in the mid-century in the commercial world that something that would later be called “westernization” was developing through the deft use of mass communication technology. In such a context, the translators learned that they could manipulate audiences through translation to reach particular goals. Descriptive translation research such as James Holmes engaged in began to analyze translations to discover how they produced their effects (1988),<sup>6)</sup> which “effects” led A. Lefevre to conceptualize translation as (intentional or motivated) “rewriting”.<sup>7)</sup> The power of translation was coming more fully into view.

At the same time, the world was changing, raising the visibility of power in politics and culture. The colonial experiment was coming to an end, rapidly in some contexts, more gradually in others. In the USA, the growing protest against American involvement in Vietnam was part of a larger questioning of expansionism throughout the world, whether American and democratic or Soviet and communist. Awareness of the political and social structures of power became even more acute with the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, the emergence of postcolonialism, and globalization of the economies and cultures of the world.

Translation studies expanded into the spaces opened up by politics and communication. In the 70’s and 80’s, Low Country translation scholars such as Theo Hermans wrote of “the manipulation of literature”.<sup>8)</sup> A larger group of

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3) E.g., M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (London, Penguin, 1991; org. ed., 1975).

4) E.g., R. Barthes, *The Fashion System* (Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1990; org. ed., 1967).

5) S. Bassnett and A. Lefevre, eds., *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990), 1-13.

6) J. S. Holmes, *Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation Studies* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988; 2nd ed., 1994).

7) A. Lefevre, *Translation, Rewriting and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992).

8) T. Hermans, ed., *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation* (London: Croom Helm, 1985).

scholars formulated a program to consider the norms that shaped translation practice both literary and non-literary.<sup>9)</sup> In 1989 José Lambert created a special research program in Translation Studies at the University of Leuven, the core activity of which was a summer workshop that came to be known by its acronym, CETRA. Over the years this annual event has involved most of the major scholars in the field of translation studies (too numerous to mention here) — and spinning off from this activity would eventually be the Nida School of Translation Studies in Misano Adriatico, Italy. These and other scholars showed how translations were not secondary works but often primary tools that institutions of all sorts deployed to shape and manipulate the components of culture and eventually arrive at the kind of culture they wanted. A title of a collection of studies edited by Theo Hermans, *The Manipulation of Literature*<sup>10)</sup> is characteristic of the sensibilities of the time; it sought to demonstrate how various institutions and power bases, from churches to governments to schools to kings, would fund translations to shore up their own ideologies and secure cultural power.

“Manipulation” became one of the catchwords of this stage of development of descriptive translation studies, and such research propelled the still infant discipline—becoming a “poly-discipline”—to take that Cultural “turn” just described. In the late 80’s and early 90’s, the writings of many translation scholars reflect a further definition of translation as an object of inquiry: particularly representative is Bassnett’s and Lefevere’s, *Translation, History and Culture*<sup>11)</sup> in which the essays considered translations as texts within networks of literary and extra-literary discourses in both source and target cultures. Now the interest of translation studies research exceeded analysis of the details of linguistic and literary differences and poetic structure and mechanics; its focus became the ideological forces surrounding and shaping translation itself. In tandem with the growth of cultural studies in the 80s, in the 90s translation studies enjoyed much growth: numerous books were published, new publishers emerged, journals were launched, conference activity increased dramatically,

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9) See, e.g., G. Toury, *Translation Norms and Literary Translations into Hebrew* (Tel Aviv: Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1977); A. Chesterman, *Memes of Translation: The Spread of Ideas in Translation Theory* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1997).

10) T. Hermans, ed., *The Manipulation of Literature: Studies in Literary Translation*.

11) S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere, eds., *Translation, History and Culture*.

and university departments slowly began to acknowledge that translation studies had become an academic discipline. The Cultural Turn also brought a shift from structuralist methodologies to poststructuralist.

Keeping in step with developments in social and political theory in the last decade or two of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, movements or clusters of translation studies scholars appear in situations in which power relations are now under close consideration: in Canada, in Brazil, in China, in the Balkan countries. And a most significant movement for the emergence of power from the cultural turn is made up of those who employed postcolonial theory within their practice of translation. Dingwaney and Maier (1995); Bassnett and Trivedi (1999); Tymoczko (1999); Simon and St.-Pierre (2000) represent four key books written to explore the interrelationship between colonialism, power and translation.<sup>12)</sup> Also in the 90s, Homi Bhabha (1994), the cultural studies scholar, introduces the concept of “translational culture”, as a way of conceptualizing the redefinition of the migrant and hybridized cultures characteristic of the postmodern world.<sup>13)</sup> Translation for Bhabha is a site of cultural production, the space where newness enters the world. Indian writers, most notably Spivak (1993/2004),<sup>14)</sup> describe and practice translation from the perspective of politics and power.

“Power” has become a key concept and lens through which to observe translations. Viewed from the angle of people who exercise power, the theme of “agency” now appears alongside power. And though the critique of abuse of power and exploitation in situations of asymmetrical power relations will continue, the concept of agency takes reflection on power into constructive domains. Cultural change is needed: but how can people effect cultural change? How can the dominant and recalcitrant worldviews, especially in the West, be helpfully engaged? Translation studies (and here Bible translators can surely see commonality), without imagining that translation ever succeeds perfectly,

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12) A. Dingwaney and C. Maier, eds., *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-Cultural Texts* (Pittsburgh; London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995); S. Bassnett and H. Trivedi, eds., *Postcolonial Translation Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999); M. Tymoczko, *Translation in a Postcolonial Context: Early Irish Literature in English Translation* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1999); S. Simon and P. St.-Pierre, eds., *Changing the Terms: Translating in the Post-Colonial Era* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2000).

13) Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

14) G. C. Spivak, “The Politics of Translation”, L. Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader*, 2nd edition (London; New York: Routledge, 1993; 2004), 369-388.

without loss, understands that translation is a vital means of importing something of the Other, something New, to a receiving culture. From a descriptive perspective, the question is how translations impact culture? And studies may reveal which species of translation, which translation strategies, yield the most effective results in facilitating cultural change. But this leads also to prescription, and the development of training methodologies to equip translators for culture-changing tasks. At the heart of such considerations is the use of power to penetrate cultural barriers, to resist hegemonic cultural tendencies.

In her book, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (2007),<sup>15)</sup> after exploring developments in translations studies, with concepts such as power and translators' agency sharply in focus, Tymoczko turns to the question of what this awareness of the power dimension means then for translators and the work they do. She suggests, "Because translators are the ones who construct meaning in translated texts, it follows that translators are meaning-makers and that in this capacity they wield considerable power, have great responsibility, and exercise important agency". What she conceives as an agenda—to empower local translators because they are the ones who can be agents of change, resistance, agents of the cultural "Other", that is, they are the ones who wield the power—Eugene Nida conceived of in somewhat different terms, undoubtedly with a rather different epistemology and of course a commitment to the Christian mission that has often been considered by his critics as the chink in his scholarly armor. The point we would make as we shift our consideration to Nida and the Power Turn is that the approach to translation pioneered by Nida, and developed thereafter in Bible Society contexts around the world, where modern, contemporary translations were desired, in many ways reflects decisions and priorities that will have similar, perhaps parallel, effects. And sometimes his work laid the groundwork for the translation studies scholars to come.

## 2. Bible Translation and the Power Turn: Implications

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15) Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation, Empowering Translators* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007).

It is in the closing chapter of Philip Stine’s biography of Nida (2004)<sup>16</sup> that he responds to the critics of Nida and his approach. In short, many translation scholars came to accuse the Nida functional equivalence approach as the cause of ethno-centric violence.<sup>17</sup> Why? Because they viewed the contemporary language, “domesticating” approach (as they called it) as deceptive, designed to propagandize unsuspecting audiences.

But in terms of the power element in translation, what is often not seen clearly by his critics is how Nida put power into the hands of target audiences. Nida was no postcolonial critic, and did not overtly think in terms of the concern for “the Other” in those terms; yet it is clear that he moved the dial in a direction that translation studies and postcolonial translation would eventually follow.

There are certain key features of the Nida approach, generally adopted and developed by the UBS, that until recent times set it apart from other Bible agencies. We would suggest that many of these features could be seen as moves in the direction of the localities, away from the West and North and into the non-West and global South. While we can’t see that Nida leaned in this direction out of any postcolonial sentiment, certain features of his program have implications for power. It is difficult to decide which features should be named in this, and we don’t want to lead anyone into some fantasy of Eugene Nida as the liberator of the oppressed. But some examples bear consideration.

(1) A most obvious example of a move that has implications for the issue of power—who wields it, where it resides in a translation situation?—comes to the fore in a fundamental criterion associated with Nida’s program: the needs of the audience take priority in addressing the various translation questions. In fact, as he developed, tested and further refined dynamic equivalence, target audience, already more visible simply by virtue of the fact of his constant physical presence among them, in so many teaching situations, necessarily featured more and more. His growing interest in culture studies ensured likewise that he would be regularly in a variety of target-cultural situations. (And of course he was famous in NYC as the member of ABS staff who was better known for his

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16) Philip C. Stine, *Let The Words Be Written: The Lasting Influence Of Eugene A. Nida*, Biblical Scholarship in North America 21 (Atlanta: SBL, 2004).

17) See, e.g., L. Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995).

absence than his presence.) We don't think much about this kind of commitment to work in the field, because it was a normal part of the program we took on in becoming UBS consultants, though few could match his stamina. But Nida was learning what makes perfect sense to us now: since naturalness of a translation is not a measurement that can be made outside of the culture by non-native speakers, proximity to the target is the only way to achieve this kind of success. The decision to include the target audience in a translation project, even if only, at first, by way of representation by selected target community members, amounted to empowerment.

(2) Another feature of the developing Nida approach would eventually produce even more empowerment. Nida developed a translation training approach that was prescriptive and teachable. Translators came away from workshops with a methodology, guidance for translational problem-solving, and in the workshop setting, this methodology could be taught to, learned and used by translators whose academic preparation for the work ranged from marginal to exceptional. Its applicability to that wide range of students would facilitate the sharing of translation power among local translation teams and professional consultants.<sup>18)</sup>

(3) The next stage, which was already underway in a more or less formal shape, was training native speakers to be translators. The program was teachable, and the advantages of training native-speakers to do the work, with their natural sensitivity to and understanding of culture and language, finally won the day. But this was a paradigm shift in translation; it was Nida, in his first two decades or so with ABS, who trained missionaries to do the work of translation. But by the 80s, "the Bible Societies made it the official position that they would only publish translations drafted by native speakers".<sup>19)</sup> Nida had been building a team of professional consultants to assist translation teams with expertise in the biblical languages and translation theory, linguistics and the

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18) See esp., Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964); Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969; 1982).

19) Philip C. Stine, *Let The Words Be Written: The Lasting Influence Of Eugene A. Nida*, 21.

administration needed to organize and run translation projects. But, though the first consultants were Westerners, with high academic credentials and experience in non-western settings, through a program of selection and scholarships, the emphasis in selection gradually shifted to non-western candidates. The point here is that through the development of a translation approach that emphasized the target culture, through developments in the translation team process that would come to focus on native speakers, and through the development of an increasingly non-Western team of translation professionals to support translation teams, what began with Nida and evolved after Nida served to shift the power in Bible translation to the target audience. The establishment of the United Bible Societies, within which Nida took responsibility for coordinating and unifying translation, should also be mentioned, for it would provide yet another vehicle for the distribution of power.

(4) A fourth and final observation concerning Nida and the location of power in the translation mission needs to be cited: this is Nida’s commitment to foster what has come to be called “Interconfessionality”. While, of course, some in the UBS member societies are more sensitive and supportive of this than others, in principle this commitment is designed to have two relevant outcomes. In some locations, it may be possible to translate the Bible in such a way that Christians from a variety of church traditions could use the same translation, thereby, as the theory goes, encouraging interconfessional understanding and cooperation. But equally, this commitment acknowledges that the historic churches of the world should be assisted in the task of translating the Bible in such a way that its own traditional interpretation, its own doctrinal structures, can be securely transmitted to future generations. This latter, especially, should not assume that the task of preserving the faith in a particular traditional configuration, and teaching the next generation of the church according to historical interpretation, can be done only with the ancient, approved text. There is room for Modern translations, contemporary language, to be deployed for the sake of teaching our people in levels of language they will understand.

All of these innovations, for they were innovations and movement away from what had been a dominant pre- and immediate post-War mission model, would

or yet will eventuate in empowerment of target audiences. For the most part, it is probably true to say that Bible Society projects do not conform to the specific agenda of the so-called Power Turn, described in terms of the deployment of power in translation for the purpose of resistance, subversion, and expression of the voice of the Other. Yet there is no doubt that Nida's strategic decision to lean towards the localities, to empower target audiences and lift them up in the process of translation, not only echoes some of these themes of translation studies scholars, but perhaps also anticipated them.

But understanding that translation is a power activity that can be done to discharge power for various reasons, and to achieve various specific translational results, raises questions of ethics and translation. How is translation as power controlled, directed, and what are the criteria that ought to guide Bible translators as they wield translation power?

### 3. Power and the Ethics of Translation

Power dynamics, not merely linguistic analysis, are reflected when and wherever Bible translation takes place. They are reflected, for example, in questions about what biblical texts will be translated (or translated first), who will translate them, how they will be translated, whether or not they have been translated satisfactorily, and who gets to decide all of these things. In the past, outsiders to the community the translation was being prepared for were usually making the key decisions. Those outsiders also tended to translate the New Testament (or NT texts) before considering the possible translation of all or parts of the Old Testament. In many cases those decisions did not reflect the priorities and insights of the local community and a Eurocentric approach tended to predominate. But that is now changing. In Africa, for example, “[t]rained Africans, proud of their heritage, are now bringing to light the long-ignored aspects of the Bible that correspond directly or partially to the African personality and mind-set”.<sup>20)</sup> Such an approach “seeks to translate the Bible with

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20) Dieudonné Prosper Aroga Bessong and Michael Kenmogne, “Bible Translation in Africa: A Post-Missionary Approach”, Philip A. Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007), 380.

a clear understanding of the African viewpoint. It seeks to recuperate and ‘restore Africa’ and everything African (fauna, flora) within the Biblical text and to reverse what could be perceived as conscious or even racially motivated attempts to destroy or minimize African references in the text”.<sup>21)</sup>

Power dynamics and ethical issues are also reflected in the particular value judgments that reveal themselves in Bible translation (as in all kinds of translation). When the Song of Solomon says, *אֲנִי שְׁחֹרֵת אֲנִי וְיָפֵה אֲנִי* (Sol 1:5), should that be translated “I am black but beautiful” (with the KJV, RSV, ESV, NIV, NAS) or “I am black and beautiful” (see the literalistic LXX [*μέλαινά εἰμι καὶ καλὴ*]), as well as the NRS and NAB)? Translators’ value judgments seem to play a significant role, perhaps implying that darkness (normally) makes one less than beautiful.

Questions of power and ethics are raised by the employment or avoidance of terms from a dominant language of wider communication in translating the Bible into minority languages for communities where the more dominant language is also known. While the biblical words for God and other religious terms (e.g., words for temples, priests, prophets, sacrifices, etc.) are derived from use in polytheistic religions (from Israel’s ancient Near Eastern context or the Greek context), Bible translations in the modern period have sometimes tended to avoid the use of local terms for God/gods or other religious terms, as though they were contaminated by their “pagan” background, suggesting the religious and moral inferiority of one culture to another.

For Protestants (and evangelicals), the world may typically be divided into those who rely exclusively on Jesus or faith and those who rely on anything else for their salvation. So when Protestant (and Evangelical) translations introduce the language of “relying” into a text where it is not explicitly found in the original, we may suspect that that theological paradigm and one of its ways of “othering” outsiders is being brought into the ancient text. We may see something of this sort of thing in texts like the translation of Galatians 3:9-10 where we read (italics are our in the following examples), “those who *rely* on faith” (NIV) for *οἱ ἐκ πίστεως* rather than the simpler, “those who believe” (NRS) or “those who have faith” or when we read “all who *rely* on the works of the law” (RSV, NIV, NRS, ESV, NET) *Ὅσοι γὰρ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου εἰσὶν*, rather

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21) Ibid., 381.

than (arguably) less prejudicial options such as “those who adhere to the works of the law”, “those who practice the works of the law”, or “those who are committed to the works of the law”, etc.

#### **4. Power and ethical issues related to “identity mapping”<sup>22)</sup>**

One particularly problematical way in which power may be exerted is through what we may call, “identity mapping”. By “identity mapping” we refer to situations where references to people or groups in the biblical text are taken to be references to people or groups in the receptor culture and context, with one identity being mapped onto another. This takes place, for instance, when readers of Bible translations take things said about, for example, “priests”, “lawyers”, “tax collectors”, “kings/rulers”, “Jews”, “slaves”, “wives” or others to apply directly to people who fit those labels in their own society. Of course, in any case where translators name a group in the receptor culture because they consider them to be culturally similar or parallel to a group named in the original text, there is a tremendous amount of power being exercised. In these cases translators and other interpreters are deciding (intentionally or not) which group(s) should be understood as the referent of positively or negatively referenced people in the original text (e.g., a group that is made to “stand in” for the Samaritans, or for any of the groups mentioned above).

Certainly one of the ugliest ways in which direct transferability has worked its way out in Christian history as been with respect to references to “Jews” in the New Testament. Statements made about particular Jews or Jewish groups in the New Testament have been taken to be accurate descriptions of Jews of all times and places. The Gospel of John uses of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι (usually translated “the Jews”) to refer to Jewish opponents of Jesus and through the centuries readers have regularly forgotten that all of the characters in the story are Jews (including Jesus and his disciples) and have intuited that what John says about those opponents of Jesus applies to all Jews. Even Martin Luther reflects that tendency. In 1543 he wrote his tract, “On The Jews and Their Lies”. In that tract

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22) The following material is slightly reworked from Roy E. Ciampa, “Ideological Challenges for Bible Translators”, *International Journal of Frontier Missiology* 28:3 (2011), 139-148.

he implies that whatever was said about the particular Jews who were addressed by John the Baptist and by Jesus may be directly applied to Jews in general in his own days:

“He did not call them Abraham’s children, but a ‘brood of vipers’ [Matt 3:7]. Oh, that was too insulting for the noble blood and race of Israel, and they declared, ‘He has a demon’ [Matt 11:18]. Our Lord also calls them a ‘brood of vipers’; furthermore in John 8[:39, 44] he states: ‘If you were Abraham’s children ye would do what Abraham did.... You are of your father the devil.’ It was intolerable to them to hear that they were not Abraham’s but the devil’s children, nor can they bear to hear this today.”<sup>23)</sup>

In light of his direct transference of this material to Jews in general in his and all times, he calls on his readers to “to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn”, advises “that their houses also be razed and destroyed” and “that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them”, “that their rabbis be forbidden to teach” and “that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews”.<sup>24)</sup>

It is not clear whether an alternative rendering of the key word (Ἰουδαῖοι) is the most effective strategy to deal with this problem.<sup>25)</sup> Perhaps paratextual notes would be preferable, but the historical abuse of Jews justified by these texts and translations suggests it would be appropriate to consider some strategy minimize the risk that Jewish people today will continue to be identified with Jewish opponents referred to in NT texts.

Similar problems have been created by the mapping of the identities of

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23) Martin Luther, “On the Jews and Their Lies”, J. J. Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann, eds., *Luther’s Works, vol. 47: The Christian in Society IV* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999; org. ed. 1543), 141 (I have underlined “them” and “they” so as to highlight the fact that in context Luther identifies the two).

24) *Ibid.*, 268-270.

25) Some translators have proposed alternative renderings of Ἰουδαῖοι. For example the NET translates the key words as “the Jewish leaders” and some other translators have suggested rendering them “some of the Jews” or referring to all first century Jews as “Judeans” in order to distinguish the referents of terms for modern ethnic and religious identities from the ancient people who predated Rabbinic and modern Judaism.

modern slaves,<sup>26)</sup> women/wives and others onto those mentioned in the ancient biblical texts.<sup>27)</sup> Those cases have a very long history and the abuses that have arisen seem, at least, to be related to the “obvious” translation choices for the underlying texts.

Other potentially harmful mappings in the pursuit of direct transferability could include the translation of Hebrew and Greek terms for things like “tax collectors”, “lawyers”, “judges”, etc. Wittingly or unwittingly, certain power structures and agendas are reflected in and established by the use of translations that encourage readers to find references to people or roles in their own social contexts (including social identities or structures never contemplated by the ancient authors) in ones that originally referred to particular groups, social structures or roles in the original biblical contexts.<sup>28)</sup> While Christians certainly need to apply ancient texts to their own contemporary contexts, problems may arise when translations are understood to be speaking directly to and about the social context of readers today.

Questions of power and ethics are raised both by the paratextual materials Bible translators provide to guide engagement with their texts and by the lack of paratextual materials where the text may naturally be taken to endorse readings that could be prejudicial to some of those in the receiving community.

## 5. Conclusion

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26) The Geneva Bible, with its series of marginal notes, was published in 1560 (the NT in 1557), after the transatlantic slave trade had begun to be felt in England. Its note on Eph 6:5-9 reads, “To cut off occasion of all pretences [sic], he teaches us that it is God's will that some are either born or made servants, and therefore they must respect God's will although their service is ever so hard.” African slaves could not expect to find much help from the Bible when references to slaves in Paul's day were directly applied to their situation fifteen centuries later (and from a remarkably different kind of slavery). For more on African-American experience with the Bible, see Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

27) On these and similar issues, see Roy E. Ciampa, “Ideological Challenges for Bible Translators”, 139-148.

28) A recent controversy in India took place because Deu 12:2-3 was translated in a way that seemed to make the text refer directly to a contemporary Indian religious group that was known by terms used in the translation (see “Father C. R. Prabhu vs The State Of Jharkhand and another on 9 April, 2013”, <http://jhr.nic.in/hcjudge/data/53-683-2012-09042013.pdf>, [June 16, 2016]).

Eugene Nida laid the groundwork for many developments in Bible translation. We haven't discussed his work in semantic domains, semiotics, and other areas that would become central to translation studies inquiry, and how these might impinge on the issue of power. The so-called power-turn in translation studies may or may not owe something to Nida's innovative approaches to training, his focus on the target audience and their meaning-making voices, and the development of an approach to translation that would empower and incorporate native speakers as translators and eventually as consultants. But the power turn, unnamed at the time, was in effect. What remains to be seen is how the power discourse in translation studies and the commitment of the global Bible translation mission to increasingly localize the work can mutually benefit one another as the 21<sup>st</sup> century marches on.

At the outset of this presentation we asked: “What, if anything, does the “poly-discipline” of translation studies, largely developed in secular university contexts by scholars quite allergic to anything related to the Bible, have to offer Bible translation?” The Nida Institute has become convinced that there is an answer to this question, and that it is an answer that can affect constructively how we think of the task of translation, how we train others to do it, and how we understand the effects and dynamics of translations in culture. Our basic approach to translation theory and scholarship, but also in developing the curricula we use in the training of translation teams and consultants, is to maintain a dialogue with translations studies scholarship; to draw from their observations what can be usefully applied. Of course some aspects, certain trends of scholarship, are more relevant than others. But if we consider for a moment a fundamental assertion of translation studies—that “translation is a cultural activity that helps to shape human identity”—we have to admit its potential relevance for the work we do, for if this is the case of “ordinary” translation, how much more is it true that Bible translation will affect the shape of Christian identity, not just in our present, but for the next generation of the church.

<Keywords>

Nida Institute, translation studies, power turn, ethics, culture.

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<Abstract>

**The Nida Institute, Its History, Scholarly Focus,  
and the “Turn to Power” in Translation Studies**

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In this paper, we will address the question, “What, if anything, does the ‘poly-discipline’ of translation studies, largely developed in secular university contexts by scholars quite allergic to anything related to the Bible have to offer Bible translation?” As in the case of many academic disciplines, Translation Studies has gone through a number of paradigm shifts, or “turns” of direction, as it has grown as a discipline. Those turns include the “Pragmatic Turn” in the 1970’s, the “Cultural Turn” in the 1980’s, and the “Power Turn” from the 90’s on up to the present. This essay will focus on the Power Turn, in which translation has come to be understood as a means of exerting power—social power, cultural power, religious power, and cognitive power. Scholarly critiques described translation in contexts of asymmetrical power relations and conditions of hegemony, and practices in which translation, controlled by those in power has abetted subjugation. Resistant translations produced in response by the colonized or other oppressed classes in society were explorations in the application of power to bring their “otherness” to light. We will also discuss some of the implications of the Power Turn for Bible translation, including questions of power and ethics in the Bible.

We suggest that Nida’s innovative approaches to training, his focus on the target audience and their meaning-making voices, and the development of an approach to translation that would empower and incorporate native speakers as translators and eventually as consultants anticipated aspects of the Power Turn.

The Nida Institute seeks to emulate Eugene Nida’s commitment to bringing insights from the widest possible range of academic fields and disciplines to bear upon the work of Bible translation, advancing the work of Bible translation. This essay explains how the “poly-discipline” of translation studies has served as a particularly constructive dialogue partner for our work, informing how we think

of the task of translation, how we train others to do it, and how we understand the effects and dynamics of translations in culture.