TRANSLATING OR TRANSFORMING -
RECEIVING MATTHEW IN AFRICA

HJ Bernard Combrink
University of Stellenbosch

Abstract

The Bible has to be rewritten in order to remain relevant also in Africa. This has implications for the translation and the transformation of its message. Translations can be categorised from literal to unduly free. The cultural and sociological factors of the source and the receptor language play an important role in translation. In this respect reduction and distortion are real dangers. In dealing with isomorphic equivalence in translations, even section headings can pose problems. Examples of the problems involved in the translation of figurative and idiomatic language also receive attention. Another aspect dealt with is the formality or informality of language, as well as issues related to direct and indirect speech.

Introduction

In two previous contributions (1994a & 1994b), the present author dealt with the reception and use of the Gospel of Matthew in South Africa during the last couple of decades as well as the more recent history. In a sequel (1995) attention was focused on the reception of Matthew in Africa. This paper now expands some remarks in the previous article on the reception in Africa specifically with a view to the issue of the translation of the New Testament, and Matthew, in Africa as an illustration of the process of transforming and contextualisation involved.

As has been acknowledged already before, this contribution will unfortunately be inconclusive due to the fact that although much of what has been done in Africa has been published widely, we here in the south are unfortunately still in many ways and by far not adequately enough aware of what has been happening in Africa in the past decades. It should also be remembered that Africa in all its diversity is not easily encompassed, and that one should be careful to generalise too quickly on the basis of a limited exposure to a limited selection of material.

A remark to be kept in mind in this respect is the controversial statement in 1991 by C S Banana that the Bible should be rewritten in order to make it relevant to times and people living under circumstances different from the biblical ones (c.f. Mukonyora 1993:x). This rewriting takes place not only in academic circles, but also in the market-place. In this contribution the emphasis will be on the aspect of translation.

Obviously the process associated with the reception of Matthew in the African context, can also be traced with reference to problems of Bible translation. Not that this is only relevant to Matthew, but some interesting aspects which can be of relevance for the reception of Matthew as such, may be looked at.

Concerning the issue of translation as such, the classic definition of translation by Nida and Taber should be kept in mind:

> Translating consists in reproducing in the receptor language *the closest natural equivalent* of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning, and secondly in terms of style (Nida & Taber 1969: 12).

Various types of translations

Translations of the Bible can be ranged on a continuum from very literal to unduly free (Beekman & Callow 1974:21ff). Literal translations are based on equivalence in surface forms, but in fact are not translations in the full sense of the word at all, because meaning and culture is largely ignored. Such translations often generate misunderstandings as the meaning of the text is not really conveyed. For the very reason that literal translations are usually supposed to be culture-free, they can be interpreted in arbitrary manner and this can often result in what some would call a syncretistic church resulting from a literal translation.

> ...a people's worldview forces them to approach information from their frame of reference. When the words are understood but the meanings are not, the intentionality of those words is perceived in relation to a focal perspective and interpretive error is the natural (and expected) result. The translation then becomes the people's understanding of Scripture rather than God's Word (Shaw 1988:207).

The issue at stake here, is the conflict between formal correspondence and functional equivalence of a translation. Although the term *dynamic equivalence* has often been employed in the past (Nida & Taber 1969), this has led to some confusion since the term *dynamic* has been understood merely in terms of something which has impact and appeal. Accordingly Nida and De Waard subsequently preferred to talk about *functional equivalence*, 'particularly since the twin bases for effective translation seem to be best represented in a sociosemiotic and sociolinguistic orientation, in which the focus is upon function' (De Waard & Nida 1986:38).

It is a misunderstanding to think that a literal translation of the original text is adhering to the *form* and an idiomatic translation as being the *meaning*. One should realise that a close formal correspondence in a receptor language quite often does not convey the correct meaning of the text. Changes of form can therefore become necessary due to a number of reasons (c.f. De Waard & Nida 1986:38). In many cases the ambiguities in a text may result from the ignorance of the readers (or translator) of the cultural and historical background of the text and its readers.

Cultural and social factors

When dealing with the phenomenon of the (imaginative) reception of texts, one has to keep in mind the complementary aspects of *sociolinguistics and translation* which involves looking at language from the perspective of its social context. This implies the priority of speech over code, function over structure, context to message and the appropriate to what is arbitrary (Nida 1986:2f). It should also be remembered that not only is no language homogenous, but no society is

homogenous either. In relating language use to social structures. one has to keep in mind that there are different levels of language, and that the function, features and factors of language may be of real sociolinguistic relevance. (c.f. Nida 1986:16ff).

In a fascinating study Wendland (1987) deals with some of the *most crucial problems* faced by any translator trying to bridge the span between quite diverse cultures. He underlines that Bible translation is one of the most complex types of communication possible. This is because the primary event is produced in the source language and it has to be translated into a different receptor language at a later date and in a different socio-cultural setting (1987:17). He furthermore draws attention to the fact that one can expect contrast and disparity in viewpoint almost anywhere in Biblical texts. One therefore has to be aware of the effect of culture on the communication of the Bible in translations as this is often not adequately taken into consideration.

But in this process *reduction and distortion of the original message* very easily can take place. Mt 22:4 reads in the RSV 'Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready'. This is transformed in the Living Bible as 'Everything is ready and *the roast is in the oven.*' In this translation the original cultural context is distorted apart from the omission of reference to specific animals. When one keeps in mind that Bible translations in Africa are often based on other translations into one or more of the major languages of wider communication in a specific area, there is a real danger of distortion due to the influence of the interposed version. When Mt 22:4 is translated in to a language like Tonga (Zambia) with the help of the *Living Bible*, real problems could occur due to the fact that an average Tonga housewife would never 'roast' meat inside an oven, but would fry it on top of the stove or roast it over an open fire in a rural setting (c.f. Wendland 1987:19). This also testifies to the obvious lack of the involvement of women in the translation project, as no woman would have endorsed such a translation.

The task of translation then implies careful and responsible study of the original communication event and context. Most Bible translations in Africa are aiming at an *'idiomatic' version*, that is a version seeking to convey the full communicative value of the SL in the RL. Wendland states that the task of the translator is not to 'adapt' the Bible according to prevailing literary tastes so as to make it a best seller in the literature of his language. Wendland comments on the challenge facing the translator:

> 'Rather, he has the far more complex and difficult assignment of 'reclothing' in the RL the dynamic forcefulness, the emotive power and the beauty that is already there, so artistically expressed in a great variety of verbal hues, patterns, and shades in Hebrew and Greek. But at the same time he has the obligation to remain faithful to the basic fabric of content out of which the original documents were cut and to the intention of those first designers' (Wendland 1987:20).

This tension between remaining faithful to the source and an effective translation into the receptor language and culture taking place, without which true communication would not be possible, is very important for our theme. Yet, the

translator does not aim to transculturise the text. 'Rather, his job is to contextualize the content of the original within an alien (RL) setting to the ultimate degree that this is possible without denying or distorting the historicity and authenticity of the biblical text' (Wendland 1987:26).

It is furthermore important to remember that '[i]n order to communicate, it is essential that languages both segment and lump together various aspects of the real and ideological world' (Nida 1986:28). This entails looking for *isomorphic relations* according to which the connection between verbal signs and their referents can be explained. Although one cannot reproduce in the receptor language the exact form of the source language text, one should aim at *isomorphic equivalence* in terms of functions. Analyses based on isomorphic relations on a number of different levels can be very helpful for Bible translators. In discussing the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-47 Nida declares that much of the story is unfortunately disguised in many translations by the paragraphing (Nida 1986:36). Something as seemingly unimportant as this can be an important aspect of succeeding in *translating* the message in a translation. Nida then treats as one of his examples of the importance of being sensitive to the value of taking isomorphic relationships into consideration, the issue of the *narrative structure and organisation of the Gospel of Matthew.*

> A translator is not in a position to alter the contents of the Gospel of Matthew. But there are certain things which can be done to highlight certain aspects of the three dominant themes, namely opposition, validation and decline in the number of followers, all of which is resolved in the dramatic events of the risen Christ. Something of these significant themes and the structure of the Gospel can be included in a brief introduction. Furthermore, the paragraphing of the text can be so arranged as to highlight the crucial divisions, and important junctures can be marked by extra spacing. Special attention should also be given to the section headings so that the dramatic character of the Matthean account can be more readily and fully appreciated (Nida 1986:46).

It should, however, be noted that the very act of highlighting and organising the text in one way or other by the translator, implies interpretation and is again an example of the fact that the interpretative fingerprints of the translator on the text cannot be evaded.

Another interesting problem associated with the reception of the Bible (e.g. Matthew) in translations, is the general practice of translating English or French *section headings* literally into African languages resulting in the headings often being taken to be part of the text itself (Loewen 1985:237). In an effort to improve the situation, headings were expanded into full sentences, which heightened the danger of the heading being taken for part of the text. It is therefore necessary to have clear markers indicating to the reader that she is dealing with a heading. This is sometimes done by marking a heading by 'the question about', or 'how...' or even 'concerning...' Some examples are: 'The Question about Fasting' (Mt 9:14) and 'The Question about Rising from the Dead' (Mt 12:35) (Loewen 1985:238). Other examples are 'Concerning being like salt and like light' (Mt 5:13); 'About

why we should not judge others' (7:1); 'About who belongs to Jesus' family truly' (Mt 12:46;

> An additional use for section headings in West African translations is *to provide information, even cultural information*, which is essential for the section, but which cannot easily be included in the text itself (Loewen 1985:240). An example of this is 'How Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey thereby claiming that he was the Israel-people's king' (Mt 21:1-11 - Loewen 1985:240).

When translating into Lamba, one of the African languages spoken in Zambia and across the border in southern Zaire, one has to take into consideration specific factors in dealing with *kinship relation*. In Lamba there is no generic term for *father* or *mother*. In each case six terms are used, but each implies a possessor relationship. But the term father also has the connotation of the father's brothers and anyone belonging to the father's clan, in addition to the biological father. As an example of the problems created by this, one can refer to Mt 28:19. Doke (1958) then says: 'Is this to be rendered 'my Father', 'our Father', 'your Father', or 'their Father'? The translator has to make a definite choice of one or other of these. The translators have chosen 'my Father''.

Doke also draws our attention to the following: 'The Lamba, in address, never uses a word indicating 'son' or 'daughter', but the word 'child' without sex distinction. The word is *umwana*. To make a literal translation, *umwana umwalalume* 'male child' is used for 'son', and *umwana umwanakasi* 'female child' for: 'daughter'....nor could the tender words of Our Lord in Matthew 9:22, 'Daughter, be of good comfort,' be translated other than by *Wemwana wanji* 'My child'' (1958:58).

Similar problems apply to the difficulties of translating the Greek word *parthenos* for which African languages do not possess an exact equivalent. 'But the essential doctrine of the Virgin Birth does not depend upon these verses or these words; it is implicit in the teaching of the New Testament; and that teaching will in time colour the Bantu word used with an enriched connotation' (Doke 1966:38).

Another interesting example is the title *Lord* with reference to Jesus. The translation of Jesus Christ as *Murena* in Venda was introduced by the first missionaries who already knew the title from North Sotho and introduced it in Venda on the presupposition that it had the same meaning in Venda. In this manner, *Murena Yesu Kristo* (The Lord Jesus Christ) became firmly rooted in the vocabulary of the church.

However, Venda people do not greet each other in this way. *Murena* is used to a child when the speaker does not know the child's name. It implies a certain measure of respect, and is especially used to a chief's child, but adults do not address each other by this word. As soon as an adult speaker knows a child's name, he no longer needs to address him as *Murena*. *Murena* with a name is used only in the New Testament phrase *Murena Yesu Kristo'* (Giesekke 1982:182.).

When dealing with the problem of translating the secondary and extended usages of words, the translation must make explicit those components of a given

concept which are relevant in a particular context (Wendland 1987:58). Sometimes loan-words cannot be avoided with the danger that such word, which have a 'zero' meaning initially, may acquire some alien features. Other options are to use a 'cultural substitute', that is a well known object in the context of the RL that is used to translate an unfamiliar SL concept but whose form differs in some significant form from the original.

Sometimes the translator's choice of a word can be influenced by the degree of 'historicity' of a word's reference. In the Chewa translation of *camel* in Mt 3:4 a loan-word and a general classifier is used: 'a certain animal called camel'. To replace the loan-word *ngamila* (camel) here by *njovu* (elephant) which would be a culturally more familiar animal, would not be acceptable as it contradicts the reality as well as the fact that elephant skin does not have much hair. In Mt 19:24 *elephant* can be used more appropriately instead of *camel*, though there may be a problem of historical-cultural fidelity and interpretation here. In Mt 23:24 the substitution of *elephant* for *camel* is meaningful due to the fact that this would effectively convey the intended dramatic contrast of the text (Wendland 1987:75). One should also realise that a cultural substitute may carry negative overtones which might disqualify it for use in the Bible. In Mt 9:17 the word *mowa* (traditionally brewed beer) should not be used as translation for *wine*, in the light of its negative social and even religious connotations in many African settings (Wendland 1987:78).

In discussing the translation difficulties in Shilluk, Anuak and Nuer, closely related Nilotic languages in the Sudan, Nida also discusses the use of metaphors in the identification of psychological states (Nida 1955:59). It becomes interesting when there is a *lack of direct correspondence between the Biblical and Nilotic cultural features*. In the well known case of Mt 5:40 (with its interesting variant in Lk 6:29), one should choose the closest natural equivalent. In this respect Nida remarks:

> Most Nilotics go entirely naked in their villages and fields. They may dress up in half-sheets for some special occasion, but they would never understand the distinction between an inner and an outer garment. However, they would understand, 'If any person enters a talk and gets your poor cloth, let him have your good one'. They could imagine a person having two cloths, but certainly not two 'cloths' to be worn at the same time. However, this use of 'poor cloth' and 'good cloth' is culturally parallel to the Biblical distinction between coat and cloak, for the latter was generally of heavier material, larger, and more expensive (Nida 1955:61).

Another example is the translation into Venda of the important Matthean term *dikaiousune* which causes interesting problems. In comparing the diagnostic semantic components of *dikaiosune* (in the semotactic context of Mt 21:32) and *u luga, u lugisa* used to translate this in Venda, Van Rooy come to the conclusion that *u luga* is entirely unsuitable to use here. 'If a Venda had to try to make something out of it, he would probably come to the conclusion that John came and taught people not to trouble others. This central Biblical concept, as translated in

the Venda Bible, hardly ever makes any sense in the contexts where it occurs' (Van Rooy 1972:429).

righteousness	**u luga**
1. positive behaviour	1. lack of negative behaviour
2. conformity to God's will	2. not disapproved by society
3. approved by society	

Van Rooy then gives the sound advice that one will have to use different terms to give the closest possible dynamic equivalent in diverse contexts. For *diakaiosune* in Mt 5:20, one should then choose a term such as *u pfa Mudzimu,* 'to obey God, to do God's will' (1972:430).

Figurative language

The problems of translation and transformation get especially acute when one has to deal with words that are not used in a literal sense. One major category of non-literal language is figurative language. This is almost universally employed to describe new experiences, for the purpose of emphasising something, or to avoid speaking directly about something. The problem is now that the different components of meaning that relate to figurative senses of words, differ greatly between languages due to the fact that such associations are usually very culture-specific.

Broadly speaking, figures of speech can be classified into two main types: replacement figures and figures of comparison. In the first category, an ordinary way of speaking is replaced by a more graphic expression, whereas in the second type the difference is between the fact that the comparison is formally marked in the text (simile) or not (metaphor) (Wendland 1987:84; c.f. Nida et al 1983, Appendix). Only some examples of translation in Matthew will be given here, without treating all the categories of figurative speech.

In the case of *metonymy*, substitute words are employed as if they were synonyms even though they really represent different semantic fields, but with one important component in common. A well known metonymy is 'hand' which is associated with power, control, authority. C.f. Mt 17:22: The Son of Man is to be delivered in to the *hands* of men [i.e.into their control]. Wendland points out that in some contexts both Chewa and Tonga have similar metonymic usages, 'but this is not true everywhere, and verbal correspondence must always give place before contextual consistency' (1987:90).

In the case of *hyperbole* we are dealing with an exaggeration or overstatement with a view to a special impact on the audience. But it might be understood literally with a wrong communication resulting. The literal rendering (or lack of adequate transformation in the translation) of Mt 11:18 'For John came *neither eating nor drinking...*' in the new Chewa New Testament, gave rise to the mistaken question to how John could then live! This resulted in the reader bringing

this into relation with the following statement that John has a demon. Wendland suggests that in this case as well as with many other hyperboles of Christ the intended meaning should be made explicit in the text in order to communicate the original intention. 'John never used to eat at banquets and he never drank wine (strong drink)' (Wendland 1987:95).

Other well known examples of hyperbole in Matthew are Mt 19:24 (the camel and the eye of the needle), Mt 5:29 (plucking out the right eye) or Mt 5:40 (letting someone have your cloak when he wants to take your coat). According to Wendland (1987:96) hyperbole is fortunately not a completely foreign rhetorical figure, thus there will be a chance that receptors will understand it correctly in context. In cases where misunderstanding will be likely, he advises that some kind of explanatory footnote should be considered.

In the case of *similes*, a *topic* (T) is usually defined by an *image* (I) on the basis of a particular *ground* (G) and signalled by a relational word as *marker*(M). The translation of similes and metaphors can cause considerable problems for the translator. In the case of the translation of references of *sheep* in Matthew in Chewa and Tonga problems arise due to the fact that among the Chewa and Tonga sheep are on the whole regarded as being rather stupid creatures and hard to take care of because they cannot be left on their own. Goats are therefore normally preferred by the indigenous population, while sheep are usually restricted to fenced farms of Europeans. In the case of the familiar simile in Mt 25:32 of the separation between the sheep and goats, the ground or basis of the comparison is to be seen in the 'valuable' sheep as opposed to the 'worthless' goats. For most Central African receptors the connotative value will be reversed (Wendland 1987:113).

The difficulties of translation and interpretation increase when a *part of the simile is not stated explicitly in the text*. In the case of the disciples (T) who are sent as (M) sheep (I) in the midst of wolves in Mt 10:16 the fact the sheep are defenceless is the implicit ground (G), although it can be deduced fairly easily here from the mentioning of the wolves. But when the disciples are instructed to be wise as serpents (Mt 10:16), the original receptors would have made the link with the fact that snakes were usually considered to be clever. The Tonga or Chewa reader, however, has extremely negative connotations associated with a snake, such as fear, distrust, and even hatred. The use of a cultural substitute *hare* would also be problematic due to the difference in form and connotations from popular folklore associating a hare with cunning trickery. So a footnote is probably the only solution here (Wendland 1987:117).

It thus clear that the translation of figurative speech and idiomatic language is a crucial aspect of the translation of the Bible. Actually, it may be the area in which the mettle of a translator is tested in the ultimate sense. S(h)e can pass this test only if she also succeeds in dealing with the cultural aspects of the source language, but especially of the receptor language in an adequate fashion. One of the important contributions of E Wendland's research (1987) on the cultural factor in Bible translation is that he draws our attention to the sociocultural aspects of direct speech, an area almost totally neglected by most translators.

Direct speech

According to Wendland (1987:133) there are three interrelated aspects of direct speech which should be taken into account in translation: the *impersonal* (time, place, circumstance), the *personal* and the *interpersonal*. Concerning the second aspect pertaining to direct speech, the *personal factor*, one has to note that the speaker's attitude, his evaluation of the communication situation, will also have an influence on the match between his manner of speaking and the situation of the speaker. Determining the attitude of a speaker may be a crucial element in the interpretation of a passage.

The Chewa translation of Mt 3:14 inverts the order of constituents in the verse and puts the final question of John first:

> But John tried to refuse saying, '*Why come to me?* I am the one who ought to be baptized by you' (Mt 3:14, Chewa).

This creates the impression as if John is upset with Jesus for coming to him. In African languages one must adopt a specific attitudinal stance vis a vis one's addressee: as no neutrality is possible: it can only be a position of superiority, equality or inequality. The politeness principle must therefore be always kept in mind when translating a text in which two or more people are involved in discourse. In Mt 20:21 the literal word's of Christ 'And he said to her: 'What do you want?'' had to be changed in the Chewa translation to avoid creating the impression of an insult to the mother of James and John. A more polite version would be 'Yes, mother', or 'Can I help?' (Wendland 1987:150).

The linguistic form of an utterance must often be altered quite drastically in order to retain its original impact. In the parable of the two sons, a literal translation of the son's answer in Mt 21:30 would be 'I go, sir' (RSV). In Chewa this would imply that the son is going somewhere else and is also talking to someone else than his father. The proposed idiomatic equivalent would be '*Chabwino, abambo*' 'All right, father' (Wendland 1985:100f). But at times even the propositional content may have to be modified with a view to maintaining the original illocutionary force of the saying. Compare the following renderings of Mt 26:74:

> RSV Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, 'I do not know the man.'

> TEV Then Peter said, '*I swear* that I am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not! I do not know that man!'

Bratcher (1981:350) explains that the TEV tried to clarify the meaning of *kataqemati,zein kai. ovmnu, ein*. To invoke a curse on oneself means to make a solemn vow that one is telling the truth and asking God to punish him if he is not speaking the truth. The TEV then incorporates this meaning of the words into the quotation itself as a performative verb 'I swear'. 'This constitutes a speech act which is 'performed' by literally pronouncing that this is what is being done' (Wendland 1985:101). In the Chewa translation an even more dynamic option is given:

> Peter began to swear and say, '*By God,* this person whom you are referring to, I don't know him at all!'

Wendland maintains that by including this traditional receptor language curse formula (which may even sound anachronistic in the English rendering of the Chewa), 'the original intention has been made explicit by this alteration of the form, and perhaps also the content, of the message' (1985:101). It is now clearly implied that God himself will punish the speaker if he is telling a lie.

Another dimension of the situational setting influencing the shape of direct discourse would be the *formality* or *informality* of the language. In many teaching situations in the New Testament where Christ was instructing people He was not necessarily well acquainted with, the style would be characterised by a great degree of repetition, exposition and explanation. The Chewa translation of Mt 19:23-24 exhibits a style corresponding to the original with the same degree of redundancy and formality:

> True indeed, I am telling you (*Zoonadi ndikukuuzani*) that it is most difficult for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Telling the truth, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (c.f. Wendland 1987:163f).

It is interesting that despite the fact that missionaries usually tried to dissociate the Gospel from socio-political concerns, the very fact of the translation of the Bible into African languages must be seen as contributing toward a grater degree of independence of the indigenous Christians. .very often facilitated a schism against missionary institutions. According to Mugambi (1989b:84) this is similar to the action of Jesus teaching with authority and criticising the Pharisees (c.f. Mt 7:28f). Sanneh (1989:50f) underlines that the translatability of Christianity - not just the Bible - has been a safeguard against cultural idolatry, and that the seeds of the divergence between the missions and colonialism had already been given with the translation enterprise so closely associated with many missionary enterprises (:112). This is incidentally in direct contrast to Islam where Arabic is ascribed the status of a revealed language as it is the medium in which the Qur'an was revealed. Mother-tongue speakers must concede that their languages are profane and mundane .The success of Islam as missionary religion is linked to the perpetuation of sacred Arabic (Sanneh 1989:212f).

In obvious contrast to Islam is the Christian mission which can be seen as having resulted in a world-wide pluralist movement. One could say that by the mother tongue projects of Scriptural translation local people were encouraged to embrace Christianity, while also embracing their own cultures. 'By their root conviction that the gospel is transmissible in the mother tongue, I suggest, missionaries opened the way for the local idiom to gain the ascendancy over assertions of foreign superiority' (Sanneh 1993:19). Due to the translation projects the 'one' God of missionary doctrine turned out to have 'many' names in different cultures (c.f. the discussion above).

> In promoting mother tongue translations, then, missionaries and their converts moved beyond universal abstractions in which cultures are nothing but mimetic

contrivances, and beyond the reductionism which makes cultural symbols identical in *unilear* sense with the conceptions which formulate them (Sanneh 1993:21).

The hermeneutical and theological task

It must be stated again that the process of translation of the Bible involves that the translation in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the content and intent of the source as constructed by the interpreter. But translation can never be a mechanical manipulation of languages as formal codes. Languages are part of peoples' total symbolic universes, but then only one aspect of a totality of dimensions contributing to and acquiring its meaning in the totality of the system of belief and behaviour in a particular cultural setting. While on the one hand claiming that such an endeavour as commanded by Jesus Christ in Mt 28:19f is an attainable goal - bringing the gospel to different people and languages and cultures - it should on the other hand not be denied that the Bible translator (and in fact every communicator of the Gospel) always remain under pressure of her own historical situation, cultural heritage, ecological environment and personal background (Wendland 1987:191).

To be able to do this in a responsible manner entails knowing one's one culture and belief system thoroughly - a fact not as evident as may often be assumed. If the translation is done for another culture or language than one's own, the task becomes even more difficult. But then the translator should immerse herself as thoroughly as possible in all the aspects of the source language's culture and the theology of the particular book of the Bible.

When one acknowledges these aspects of translation, it must also be highlighted that the translator's task remains primarily exegetical in that she has the responsibility to facilitate the communication of the source text into the receptor language in a manner in which content is not distorted or the rhetorical impact and appeal not misrepresented. But there still remains the further task of translating and transforming the message of a text into the full socio-cultural context of the reader. This calls for attention to all the hermeneutical and theological issues involved in the reception of Matthew in different communities in Africa. (c.f. Combrink 1995b).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beekman J & Callow, J 1974. *Translating the Word of God*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House.

Bratcher, RG 1981. *A translator's guide to the Gospel of Matthew*. London: United Bible Societies. (Help for translators.)

Combrink, HJB 1994a. The use of Matthew in the South African context during the last few decades. *Neotestamentica* 28, 339-358.

Combrink, HJB 1994b. Resente Matteusnavorsing in Suid-Afrika. *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 50 (1&2), 169-193.

Combrink, HJB 1995b. The reception of Matthew in Africa. *Scriptura*,

De Waard, J & Nida E A 1986. *From one language to another: Functional equivalence in Bible translating*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Doke, CM 1966. The translation of 'The Holy Spirit' in Bantu languages. *The Bible translator* 17, 32-38.

Giesekke, DW. 1970. Venda names For God. *The Bible Translator* 21, 180-185.

Mukonyora, I, Cox, JL & Verstraelen, FJ (Co-ordinator) 1993. *'Rewriting' the Bible: the real issues*. Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press.

Loewen, JA 1985. A new look at section headings in West African translations. *The Bible Translator* 36, 237-241.

Louw, JP (Ed) 1986. *Sociolinguistics and communication*, 1-49. London: United Bible Societies.

Mugambi, JNK 1989b. *The Biblical basis for evangelization: theological reflections based on an African experience*. Nairobi: Oxford University.

Nida, EA 1955. Problems in Translating the Scriptures into Shilluk, Anuak and Nuer. *The Bible translator* 6, 55-63.

Nida, E 1986. Sociolinguistics and translating, in Louw, J P (Ed), *Sociolinguistics and communication*, 1-49. London: United Bible Societies.

Nida, EA & Taber, CT 1969. *The theory and practice of translation*. Leiden: Brill.

Nida et al. 1983. *Style and discourse*. Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa.

Sanneh, L 1989. *Translating the message: The missionary impact on culture*. Maryknoll: Orbis. (American Society of Missiology series 13.)

Sanneh, L 1993. *Encountering the West. Christianity and the global cultural process: The African dimension*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

Shaw, RD 1988. *Transculturation: The cultural factor in translation and other communication tasks*. Pasadena: William Carey Library.

Van Rooy, JA 1972. Venda Semantics I. Terms reflecting primarily one feature from the traditional world view. *The Bible translator* 23, 418-430.

Van Rooy, JA 1973. Venda Semantics II. Terms reflecting primarily one feature of the traditional world view. *The Bible translator* 24, 431-448.

Wendland, ER 1985. *Language, society , and Bible translation*. Cape Town: Bible Society of South Africa.

Wendland, ER 1987. *The Cultural Factor In Bible Translation. A Study of Communicating the Word of God in a Central African Cultural Context*. United Bible Societies: London.