

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE:
A METHOD OF TRANSLATION
OR A SYSTEM OF HERMENEUTICS?¹

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The recent popularity of Dynamic Equivalence in translating the Bible justifies a closer scrutiny of it, particularly in light of the growing interest in biblical hermeneutics which it parallels. A comparison of the disciplines of D-E translation and hermeneutics reveals a large amount of similarity between the two. The similarity exists whether one compares D-E to traditional hermeneutics or to theories being advanced in contemporary hermeneutics. In view of the close parallel between D-E and hermeneutics, three questions need to be faced: a linguistic one, an ethical one, and a practical one.

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Dynamic Equivalence entered the scene as a formalized method of translation and as a scientific discipline with a theoretical basis about two decades ago, but its presence as a practical pursuit in translating the Bible into English dates back to around the turn of the century.² Since the 1960's, it has grown rapidly in popularity and has

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²E. A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating, with Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964) 5. Nida noted that the art of translation had outstripped the theory of translation. His work was put forth as an effort to provide a theoretical basis for what was already being produced. In his survey of the history of translation in the western world he writes, "The 20th century has witnessed a radical change in translation principles" (21). Later in the same work he adds, "The present direction is toward increasing emphasis on dynamic

been greatly acclaimed.³ This investigation purposes to examine the extent to which dynamic equivalence draws upon hermeneutical

equivalence. This represents a shift of emphasis which began during the early decades of this century" (160). Perhaps he was looking back to the *Twentieth Century New Testament* (1902) as the first effort which utilized what he chooses to label "dynamic equivalence" principles. F. F. Bruce, *History of the English Bible* (3rd ed.; New York: Oxford, 1978) 153, calls this 1902 publication the first of a series of "modern English translations."

³E. H. Glassman, *The Translation Debate`What Makes a Bible Translation Good?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981), devotes his work to showing the virtues of what he calls "content-oriented" translations, another name for dynamic-equivalent translations. J. R. Kohlenberger III, *Words about the Word`A Guide to Choosing and Using Your Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 61-72, also presents an apologetic for the dynamic equivalence approach. D. A. Carson, "The Limits of Dynamic Equivalence in Bible Translation," *Notes on Translation* 121 (Oct 1987) 1, hails the triumph of dynamic equivalence in these words: "As far as those who struggle with biblical translation are concerned, dynamic equivalence has won the day`and rightly so."

principles as a part of its translation method and to weigh whether it should be termed a method of translation or a system of hermeneutics. Eugene A. Nida, who probably has earned the title of "the father of dynamic equivalence," though he more recently has chosen to call the process "functional equivalence,"⁴ sees hermeneutics as entirely separate from dynamic-equivalence translation procedures,⁵ but does so on the basis of a novel understanding of hermeneutics. He defines the field of hermeneutics as that which points out parallels between the biblical message and present-day events and determines the extent of relevance and the appropriate response for the believer.⁶

⁴J. de Waard and E. A. Nida, *From One Language to Another, Functional Equivalence in Bible Translating* (Nashville: Nelson, 1986) vii-viii. The authors mean nothing different from what Nida intended by "dynamic equivalence" in his *Toward a Science of Translating*, but have opted for the new terminology because of a misunderstanding of the older expression and because of abuses of the principle of dynamic equivalence by some translators.

⁵E. A. Nida and W. D. Reyerburn, *Meaning Across Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981) 30.

⁶*Ibid.*

This concept of hermeneutics is quite different from that traditionally assigned to the word. Normally it is defined as "the science of interpretation."⁷ *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines hermeneutics as "the study of the methodological principles of interpretation."⁸ *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary Unabridged* makes hermeneutics synonymous with exegesis.⁹ Terry more precisely notes that hermeneutics constitutes the principles of interpretation that are applied to exegesis.¹⁰ Yet Nida emphatically distinguishes between exegesis and hermeneutics, and says they are two distinct components of the larger category of interpretation.¹¹

Admittedly the connotation of "hermeneutics" has shifted in recent times, creating widespread confusion. Yet Nida appears to be in disharmony with everyone in his definition. He has equated hermeneutics with what has traditionally been called "application," which is based on the one correct interpretation of the original writing,¹³ and in so doing, has represented an extreme position that is unacceptable because it represents an abnormal sense of the word. So his strict dissociation of hermeneutics and translation cannot be taken seriously.

In light of current confusion over the scope of hermeneutics we must stipulate our meaning of the term in the context of this investigation. In the earlier part of the discussion we will focus on "the more technical kind of hermeneutics known as sacred or biblical hermeneutics,"¹⁴ in other words, the traditional definition. In the future we will expand to include more recent elements which have in some circles found their way under the broadened umbrella of "hermeneutics."

⁷M. S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.) 17. H. A. Van der Kamp, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) 16 defines hermeneutics "the science and art of biblical interpretation." D. F. Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986) 4, views the traditional definition of hermeneutics as "study of the locus and principles of interpretation."

⁸*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam, 1983) 536.

⁹*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (New York: Random House, and Schuster, 1979) 851. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam, 1971) 1059, defines hermeneutics as follows: "the study of the methodological principles of interpretation and explanation; *specif.*: the study of the general principles of biblical interpretation."

¹⁰Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 19.

¹¹Nida and Reyerburn, *Meaning* 30. See also de Waard and Nida, *From One Language to Another* 40, where the authors write, "This issue of the communicative role of the Bible highlights an important distinction which may be made between exegesis and hermeneutics, although some writers use these terms almost indistinguishably."

¹²B. L. Ramm and others, *Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987) 6. Ramm writes, "Although traditionally hermeneutics has been treated as a special theological discipline, recent studies have endeavored to enlarge the scope of hermeneutics. These studies wish to see hermeneutics in a new perspective as a function of the human understanding . . ." (6). Ferguson notes that the traditional definition "needs amplification and qualification since there has been a steady shifting of emphasis in carrying out the hermeneutical task . . ." (*Biblical Hermeneutics* 4).

¹³Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 600.

¹⁴Ramm, *Hermeneutics* 6.

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE AND TRADITIONAL HERMENEUTICS

The Overlapping of Dynamic Equivalence and Exegesis

One of the striking features of dynamic equivalence is its embracing of its methodology of what has been known traditionally as biblical exegesis. Inclusion of exegetical procedures is necessitated by the first of three steps dynamic-equivalence theory recommends. The three steps are reduction of source text to its structurally simplest and most semantically evident kernel, transference of the meaning from the source language to the receptor language at a structurally simple level, and generation of the stylistically and semantically equivalent expression in the receptor language.¹⁵

The first of the three steps consists of two parts, analysis of the source text in terms of grammatical relationships and analysis of it in terms of the meaning of the words and combinations of words.¹⁶ A common way to illustrate grammatical analysis is with uses of the Greek genitive case and the corresponding English construction of two nouns or pronouns connected by "of."¹⁷ Those familiar with the earliest stages of NT Greek study recognize quickly that an analysis of various uses of the Greek genitive case is a standard part of preparation for biblical exegesis. Yet there is a strange reticence by those who espouse D-E methodology to recognize that this type of study has been underway for a long time.¹⁸

The 1986 work by de Waard and Nida does refer to standard tools of lexicography, but it casts them in a negative light. Traditional bilingual dictionaries are labeled as deficient because they depend almost entirely

¹⁵Nida, *Toward a Science* 68. According to Nida, this three-step process is the way "the competent translator" works.

¹⁶E. A. Nida and C. R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969) 3.

¹⁷Nida, *Toward a Science* 207-208, 229; Nida and Taber, *The Theory* 35-37. "Field of blood" (1:19) and "God of peace" (Phil 4:9) are two among the suggested examples of ambiguity (Nida and Taber 35). For the former Nida suggests two possible interpretations, "field where blood was spilled" or "field that reminded people of blood." For the latter he rejects "a peaceful God" as an option, and chooses "God who gives peace" or "God who causes peace."

¹⁸The sole use of "exegesis" in the index of Nida's *Toward a Science of Translating* is in a page reference to the field in his historical survey of translations in the western world (Nida, *Toward a Science* 28). The only place where Nida and Taber use "exegesis" in their *Theory and Practice of Translation*, according to their index, is as a part of a sample set of principles prepared for making a "Southern Bantu" translation, and this mention is only in passing (Nida and Taber 182). The standard grammars for NT Greek are never alluded to in the above works, nor are they listed in their bibliographies.

This coolness toward what has been a long established field of biblical studies is perhaps reflected in the judgment of Nida and others that good exegetes and grammarians make poor translators. A. Nida, "Bible Translation for the Eighties," *International Review of Mission* 70 [1981] 136-137). Hess, "Some Assumptions," a paper read at the President's Luncheon, Biola University, November 1984, 9, states as his ninth assumption "that the linguistic and cultural demands of non-European languages necessitate biblical interpretation that goes beyond traditional conventional exegesis." This assumption of a Wycliffe Bible translator displays the dissatisfaction with traditional exegesis as Nida and his associates seem to entertain.

"glosses," i.e. surface structure transfer of meanings.¹⁹ The same authors criticize Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker for being very unsystematic and in failing to cover the ranges of meaning of individual words.²⁰ It is evident from these criticisms that the analysis step in the D-E process covers the same ground that has traditionally been covered by exegesis, an exegesis based on principled interpretation that compose the field of hermeneutics.²¹

From the perspective of a traditional definition of hermeneutics little can be entertained that D-E is, among other things, a system of hermeneutics. Perhaps some will respond, however, that all translations are commentaries and hence incorporate the application of hermeneutical principles in arriving at their renderings. This is absolutely true.²² A certain degree of interpretation is unavoidable, no matter how hard the translator tries to exclude it. Yet a characteristic of formal equivalence is its effort to avoid interpretation as much as possible by transferring directly from the surface structure of the source language to the surface structure of the receptor language.²³ By omitting the step of analysis that is built into the D-E approach, interpretation can be excluded to a much higher degree. Since D-E intentionally incorporates interpretation, it obviously has a significantly higher degree of interpretation than formal equivalence and is in a much stronger sense a system of hermeneutics than is formal equivalence.

Dynamic Equivalence and Ambiguous Passages

One type of passage illustrates particularly well the commitment to dynamic equivalence to the practice of hermeneutics. This is a passage where interpretation is uncertain, i.e. one whose meaning is ambiguous. As a general rule, dynamic equivalence is dedicated to the elimination of ambiguities.

In building his rationale for D-E, Nida quotes Alexander Fraser Ty

¹⁹de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 160.

²⁰Ibid., 161-62.

²¹Further evidence of the inclusion of hermeneutics in the D-E methodology is seen in what the authors have written about such things as how to handle the synonyms $\gamma\alpha\pi\nu$ (*agapa*, "I love") and $\phi\iota\lambda\epsilon$ (*phile*, "I love") in John 21:15-19 (de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 93), the treatment of $\alpha\nu\alpha\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\alpha$ (*ibid.*, 105), the meaning of $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\mu\beta\nu$ (*katalamban*, "I apprehend") in John 1:5 (107), and the meaning of $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\alpha$ $\lambda\eta\sigma\omicron$ (*martyria Isou*, "the testimony of Jesus") in Revelation (ibid., 127). All these belong properly in the realm of exegesis. As a matter of fact, de Waard and Nida in essence acknowledge the essential presence of the science of interpretation in D-E when they write, "The primary exegetical perspective of a translator is 'what did the text mean to the people who were the original receptors?'" (ibid., 177).

Glassman gives a similar but simpler explanation of the step of analysis, using $\sigma\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ ("flesh") with its varying NT meanings as one of his examples of the interpretive decisions that must be made by a D-E translator (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 59-60).

²²D. G. Rossetti expressed this over a century ago: "A translation remains perhaps the most common form of commentary" (cited by Nida, *Toward a Science* 156).

²³W. L. Wonderly, *Bible Translations for Popular Use* (London: United Bible Societies, 1968) 5. He refers to formal correspondence, a later name for formal equivalence, "the direct transfer technique" and to dynamic equivalence as a process of "indirect transfer, involving 'decomposition and recomposition' or analysis-plus-restructuring" (ibid.).

principle approvingly: "To imitate the obscurity or ambiguity of the original is a fault and it is still a greater one to give more than one meaning."²⁴ To follow through with this perspective, he later uses the Greek genitive-case form with the corresponding use of the English preposition "of" to illustrate how to eliminate ambiguities.²⁵ "Cup of the Lord" (1 Cor 10:21) is rendered "the cup by which we remember the Lord," "wisdom of words" (1 Cor 1:17) is taken to be "well arranged words," and "sons of wrath" (Eph 2:3) becomes "those with whom God is angry." In each case the obscurity in meaning disappears through a grammatical restructuring.²⁷

More recently, de Waard and Nida have expressed the same perspective regarding ambiguous passages: "It is unfair to the original writer and to the receptors to reproduce as ambiguities all those passages which may be interpreted in more than one way."²⁸ They add that the translator should place in the text the best attested interpretation and provide in marginal notes the appropriate alternatives.²⁹

Usually the case for non-ambiguity is buttressed by references to the inadequacies of formal-equivalence translations. Examples of ambiguous and allegedly misleading formal-equivalence translations have been multiplied. A volume of examples adduced have won the case for D-E in the minds of some. As persuasive as these lists are, however, superficiality and carelessness are marked the choices of at least some of the illustrations. The scope of our discussion permits citation of only one widely used passage to illustrate this. In Psalm 101 Glassman cites the description of the "blessed man" who in formal-equivalence translations does "not stand in the way of sinners." He then criticizes the rendering in these words: "Nowadays to stand in the way of something or someone mea-

²⁴A. F. Tytler, *The Principles of Translation* (1790), cited by Nida, *Toward a Science* 19.

²⁵Nida, *Toward a Science* 207-208; cf. also Nida and Taber, *The Theory* 35-37; Wonderly, *Bible Translations* 163.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Wonderly in 1968 noted the rarity of an expression that is ambiguous when its total context is taken into account (Wonderly, *Bible Translations* 162). He conversely observed that a completely "unambiguous" expression is also rare (ibid.). In light of this he saw the elimination of all possible ambiguities as undesirable. Yet, for the sake of the uneducated, he advised the translator to "eliminate them or reduce to a minimum the probability of their being misunderstood" (ibid., 162).

Determination to eliminate ambiguities has seemingly grown stronger with the passage of time. In 1981 Nida and Reyburn saw attempts to reproduce ambiguities in a translation as unfair to the original author and unfair to the untrained reader (Nida and Reyburn, *Meaning* 7-8; ambiguities referred to are, of course, those resulting from the scholars' lack of understanding, not intentional ambiguities intended by an author; see also Jean-Claude Margot, "Should a Translation of the Bible Be Ambiguous," *BT* 32/4 [Oct 1981] 406-413). They suggested that the translator's goal should be to "translate so as to prevent misunderstanding of what the original receptors understood" (ibid., 20).

Also in 1981 Glassman gave "avoid ambiguity" as one of five guidelines to be followed in a correct translation. He displays much less caution in his application of this principle than Wonderly did earlier (Glassman, *The Translation Debate* 101-4).

²⁸de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 39.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰E.g. Carson, "The Limits" 1.

prevent or hinder, to serve as an obstacle."³¹ He should have indicated that was only a personal opinion because his statement is blatantly inaccurate according to authorities on the English language. Webster's unabridged dictionary gives the following as the first definition of the expression "in the way of": "so meet or fall in with; in a favorable position for doing or getting."³² This is clearly the correct idea conveyed by the Hebrew, that of "associate with." The blundering man does not place himself in a compromising position with sinners.

Unfortunately the reaction of Glassman and others against a formal equivalence rendering of Psalm 1:1 is characteristic of other ill-advised conclusions by D-E advocates. This is surprising, for some of these are leading linguists who as a part of their methodology advocate a careful respect for the referential meaning of words and expressions as they appear in dictionary resources.³³ Yet they disregard their own advice. For example, de Waard and Nida object to formal equivalence renderings of Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want" by stating flatly, "*want* no longer means 'to lack' but rather 'to desire.'"³⁴ In contrast, contemporary dictionaries give the intransitive verb "want" a meaning of "lack" or "have a need,"³⁵ exactly what the psalmist intended to say. Rather than correcting the formal-equivalence translators, the linguistic specialists should have acknowledged the legitimacy of their word choice. They would have been more credible if they had prefaced their critical remark with "in my sphere of knowledge" or "according to our judgment," but to say with no qualification "*want* no longer means 'to lack'" raises questions about their judgment in general.

Formal-equivalence translations handle ambiguities in exactly the opposite way. In the receptor rendering they maintain as far as possible the ambiguity that exists in the source language. This places a heavier responsibility upon the reader and student of the English text by forcing him either to interpret the passage himself or to resort to a commentary or Bible teacher or expositor.

³¹Glassman, *Translation Debate* 108. Carson, "The Limits" 5, and de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 33, use the same illustration. Glassman is cited because his work has the earliest publication date, though he had access to the unpublished manuscript of de Waard and Nida (Glassman, *Translation Debate* 127 [ch 6, n 7]) and may have obtained it from them.

³²*Webster's New Twentieth Century* 2071. This same source gives as the first definition of "in the way" the idea of obstructing, impeding, or hindering, but "in the way of" is a separate entry (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, on the other hand, defines "in the way" as meaning, first of all, "a position to be encountered by one: in or along one's course" (1325). The idea of hindrance or obstruction is not introduced until the second definition in this latter source. Similarly, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines "in the way" as follows: "on or along one's path, road, or course: in a position to be encountered by one" (2588).

³³Nida, *Toward a Science* 70.

³⁴de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 9.

³⁵*Webster's New Twentieth Century* 2059. *Webster's New Collegiate* gives "to be needy or desirous" as the first meaning and "to have or feel need" as the second (1327). The definition incorporating the idea of "desire" is not given until the fourth definition. After giving an obsolete definition, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines "want" by "to be in need" in the first non-obsolete meaning.

³⁶Another formal equivalence rendering such as "lack" may be clearer in the minds of some, but "want," but "want" is still a very legitimate option.

help, but it also leaves open interpretive options that would otherwise be beyond his reach.³⁷ It also runs less risk of excluding a correct interpretation.

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE AND CONTEMPORARY HERMENEUTICS

To compare dynamic equivalence with contemporary hermeneutics, it is necessary to sketch some of the recent trends in the latter field.

Recent Trends in Hermeneutics

One of the recent foci in hermeneutical discussions is the establishment of a starting point for interpretation. Special attention to this aspect of interpretation furnishes a convenient approach to comparing D-E with contemporary hermeneutics.

This starting point, sometimes called the interpretive center, functions as a control for the interpreter as he attempts to bring together diverse texts of Scripture.³⁸ It serves as the organizing principle, furnishing the interpretive structure for exegesis, and is therefore a very important consideration.

Eitel portrays two broad types of hermeneutical controls, a Scripture-dominant one and a context-dominant one.³⁹ These two are a convenient way to divide the wide assortment of starting points that have been proposed. One belongs to the past and focuses on elements in the original settings of various portions of Scripture, and the other belongs to the present with elements of the contemporary world setting the tone for interpretation.

Thiselton insists that the starting point must be something in the present situation of the interpreter.⁴⁰ The interpreter addresses his initial questions to the text and is personally interpreted by the response of the text, thus beginning

³⁷J. W. Scott, "Dynamic Equivalence and Some Theological Problems in the NIV," *WTJ* 48 (1986) 355, points out the superiority of the KJV and NASB renderings of Acts 16:31 to that of the NIV, in this regard. Translators with limited understanding of the text, he notes, will more probably convey the original meaning more accurately and more completely than those of a free translation (see also p. 351). E. L. Miller, "The *New International Version* on the Prologue of the Gospel of John," *HTR* 72/3-4 (July-Oct 1979) 309, criticizes the NIV for not retaining the ambiguity of the Greek in John 1:9, saying that the translators had usurped the reader's right to an accurate rendering of the text. J. C. Jeske, "Faculty Review of the Revised NIV," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 85/2 (Spring 1988) 106, cites the same version for its failure to retain the ambiguity of the Greek in Heb 9:14. Yet he also commends the NIV for retaining ambiguity in its handling of Luke 12:10 (105). A. H. Nichols (in "Explicitness in Translation and the Westernization of Scripture," *Reformed Theological Review* 3 [Sept-Dec 1988] 78-88) calls this focus of D-E "explicitness" and pinpoints some of the difficulties it creates in translation.

³⁸D. M. Scholer, "Issues in Biblical Interpretation," *EQ* LX:1 (Jan 1988) 16.

³⁹K. E. Eitel, "Contextualization: Contrasting African Voices," *Criswell Theological Review* 1 (Spring 1988) 324.

⁴⁰A. C. Thiselton, "The New Hermeneutic," *New Testament Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977) 315.

hermeneutical circle.⁴¹ Thiselton criticizes the traditional method according to which the interpreter works with the text as a passive object, making it his starting point. This, he says, is impossible.⁴²

Among others who have joined Thiselton in making something like this a present a controlling factor in hermeneutics are a number of cross-cultural communication leaders. Padilla is even more specific about the necessity of the interpreter's starting from his own situation.⁴³ Kraft agrees and notes that different cultural backgrounds produce different needs, which in turn prompt the seeker to ask different questions.⁴⁴ Because of this, he continues, new theologies will eventually emerge in non-Western cultures. Revelation is thus a relative matter, differing in each culture and necessitating that interpretation begin with revelation formulated by the interpreter.⁴⁵

Marxism as an ideological system is the hermeneutical starting point of liberation theology.⁴⁶ Another proposed contemporary starting point in hermeneutics is natural revelation. Mbiti sees natural revelation deposited in African religions as equal in authority with and therefore in control of biblical revelation.⁴⁷ Bruce Narramore places natural revelation through secular psychology on the same level of authority as biblical revelation and interprets the Bible through the eyes of secular psychological theory.⁴⁸ This list of controlling principles could be expanded easily.⁴⁹

The above rapid survey reflects that in the minds of many the traditional

⁴¹Ibid., 316.

⁴²Ibid.; A. C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) 87.

⁴³C. R. Padilla, "The Interpreted Word: Reflections on Contextual Hermeneutics," *Themelios* 10 (1981) 22.

⁴⁴C. H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979) 144-46.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 177.

⁴⁷J. S. Mbiti, "The Encounter of Christian Faith and African Religion," *Christian Century* 97 (April 27 - September 3, 1980) 817-18.

⁴⁸Bruce Narramore, "The Isolation of General and Special Revelation as the Fundamental Basis to the Integration of Faith and Learning," paper read at President's Luncheon, Biola University, 22, 1984, 2-3, 10.

⁴⁹Some representative writers with a feminist emphasis are explicit about interpretive controls pertaining to their present personal situations. Hull starts with the interpretive guideline that women are fully redeemed and formulates her biblical interpretations in this light (G. G. Hull, "Response," *Women, Authority and the Bible* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986] 24). Fiori's organizing principle in interpretation is the oppression of women by men (Elisabeth Schiappa Fiori, *In Memory of Her* [New York: Crossroad, 1984] 32-33). In light of contemporary feminist emphases Jewett and Bilezikian identify Galatians 3:28 as a norm according to which all Scriptures must be interpreted (P. K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975] 142; G. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985] 128; see also Jerry H. Ney, "Mediated Meaning: A Contextualist Approach to Hermeneutical Method," *Asbury Theological Journal* 43/1 [Spring 1988] 37-38). The conviction that contemporary experience should be identified with apostolic Christianity is another principle that will control interpretation (R. Stronstad, "Trends in Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Paraclete* 22/3 [Summer 1988] 2-3). Other controls that have been suggested include a decision about whether one can lose his salvation or not, a conviction that non-participation in war, and ideas about the capability of a believer's never sinning (Stronstad, "Issues" 16-17).

starting point in hermeneutics, that of the original text, is no longer acceptable control in interpretation, if it ever was. Criticisms of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation are often direct and uninhibited.⁵⁰ It is clear that the hermeneutical focus has shifted dramatically from the original setting of Scripture to a variety of contemporary issues that have become interpretative controls.

Trends in Translation

Contemporary trends in translation have paralleled those in hermeneutics. The traditional method of translation adopted the source message as its control and sought to bring the contemporary reader back to that point.⁵¹ Most reader preferences in translation express the opposite goal, that of bringing the source message into the twentieth century to the contemporary reader.⁵² The new approach to relate the text to the receptor and his modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture, a controlling factor called "the principle of equivalence effect."⁵³ The traditional method of taking the receptor to the text seeks to help the reader identify himself with a person in the source-language context as fully as possible, teaching him the customs, manner of thought, and means of expression of the earlier time. With D-E, comprehension of the patterns of the source-language culture is unnecessary.⁵⁴ The prime concern given to effective communication

⁵⁰E. g. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* 131, 136-137; W. S. Lasor, "The Sensus Plenior and Biblical Interpretation," *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 266; see also Scholer, "Issues" 9.

⁵¹Nida, *Toward a Science* 165.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 166; Glassman, *Translation Debate* 74; H. M. Wolf, "When 'Literal' Is Not Accurate," *NIV The Making of a Contemporary Translation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986) 127. Jerome's Vulgate has often been used as an early example of dynamic equivalence or idiomatic translation because Jerome expressed the purpose of translating "sense for sense" rather than "word for word" (e.g. see Nida, *Toward a Science* 13; J. Beekman and J. Callow, *Translating the Word of God* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1974] 24). This widely used quotation of Jerome is wrongly used, however, because Jerome adds an important qualification to his statement that is not usually noticed: "I translate for Holy Scripture where even the word order is sacred" (Epistle LVII, in *Jerome: Letters* [ed. J. Labourt; Paris, 1953] III, 59, cited by Harvey Minkoff, "Problems of Translations: Concern for the Text Versus Concern for the Reader," *Biblical Review* 4/4 [Aug 1988] 36). *Mysterium*, the Latin word rendered "sacred" in this quotation, is rendered "a mystery" by others (Philip Schaff and J. Wace, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954] 1:102) because *mysterium* and *sacramentum* were used almost interchangeably by the Latin Fathers to refer to holy things (A. Dulles, "Mystery in Theology," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* [Washington: Catholic University of America, 1967] 10:152). Regardless of the English rendering of this word, however, the fact remains that because of its inspiration, Jerome put Scripture into a special category that required more literal translation principles than other literature. His Vulgate was therefore quite literal (Minkoff, "Problems" 36).

⁵³*Ibid.*, 159. Minkoff describes formal equivalence in different terminology. It produces a "text-oriented" or "overt" translation because of its persuasion that the meaning lies in the text. D-E on the other hand produces a "reader-oriented" or "covert" translation, assuming that meaning inheres in the audience reaction to the text (Minkoff, "Problems" 35).

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

D-E at the expense of the source is a vivid confirmation of this shift in focus.⁵⁵

These two starting points are quite distinct from each other. Formal equivalence and D-E approaches represent two opposite poles in a clash that sometimes has been labeled "literal translation" vs. "free translation."⁵⁶ To be sure, there are many grades or levels between the polar distinctions,⁵⁷ but they *are* distinctions. The differing grades between the two poles are traceable to the varying degrees of consistency with which the translators have adhered to their stated goals and to self-imposed limitations upon the full implementation of their principles from passage to passage within the translation.

An example of across-the-board dynamic equivalence is *The Cotton Patch Version* produced by Clarence Jordan. It transforms the source text culturally, historically, and linguistically.⁵⁸ In this work Annas and Caiaphas are presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention. Jesus is born in Gainesville, Georgia, and lynched rather than being crucified. Most, of course, would not have gone D-E to that extreme.⁵⁹ Yet the work still illustrates the direction of D-E. It shows how the methodology is limited only by the judgment of the translators and translators.⁶⁰

Such a release from restraints of the original text coincides with varying degrees of subjectivism that characterize contemporary hermeneutical systems. These recent schemes dismiss the traditional system of letting the author be the determining factor in interpretation. In so doing, of necessity they forego the judgment of the Bible's meaning through the eyes of something or someone contemporary. Hirsch notes that the text has to represent someone's meaning; if it is not the author's, then it must be the modern critic's meaning that is drawn from the text.⁶¹ Hirsch's terminology distinguishes the author's meaning from the critic's by calling what the author intended "meaning" and by using the

⁵⁵D-E does give attention to the source text in its step called "analysis," which is described as follows: "The analysis of the source text is the first step in the process of translation. This is not the prime concern of D-E, however. In its quest for greater communicative effectiveness, it intentionally omits some information of the source text with all its details (see Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* 224). Perhaps the secondary importance of the source text and its meaning is reflected in some of Nida's expressions when he injects some of his precautionary remarks. Commenting on the Phillips' translation for its high rate of decodability, he adds, "Whether Phillips' translation of a passage is the best way of rendering these difficult verses is not the question at this point" (*Toward a Science* 175-76). This could imply that accuracy in meaning is not the major concern of the translation (see also 207-8 where a similar idea is expressed). Nichols sees the plight of D-E as hopeless because it fails to distinguish between *translation* and *communication* ("Explicitness" 82).

⁵⁶Nida, *Toward a Science* 22, 171.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁸Nida and Reyburn, *Meaning* 19; Glassman, *Translation Debate* 74. Two translations that are similar to *The Cotton Patch Version* in their across-the-board D-E are *God is for Real, Man* by Clarence Jordan and Burke (1966) and *The Word Made Fresh* by Andrew Edington (1975) (S. Kubo and W. F. Speer, eds., *Many Versions?* [rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983] 330-33).

⁵⁹Nida, *Toward a Science* 184.

⁶⁰For example, de Waard and Nida, *From One Language to Another* 37-39, suggest five situations in which functional (i.e. dynamic) equivalence rather than formal equivalence should be used. Carson, *The Bible and Its Interpreters* 5-7, suggests that equivalence of response be limited to linguistic categories alone.

⁶¹E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University, 1967) 3, 5.

"significance" to refer to a relationship between that meaning and a person, concept, situation, or anything else.⁶²

Another way of viewing such hermeneutics is by contrasting it with the traditional hermeneutical distinction between interpretation and application. Gill, an advocate of a contextualist approach to hermeneutics, says it quite plainly. He supposes that his mentor of thirty years ago, Professor Traina, will disagree with his contextualist method in which there is no longer a distinction between interpretation and application.⁶⁴ Application has taken a position as a part of interpretation, and in the case of Jordan's translation, it has almost replaced interpretation completely.

While Nida and others call *The Cotton Patch Version* a translation, Kraft calls it a "cultural translation" or "transculturation,"⁶⁵ but he also concludes that translation is a limited form of transculturation.⁶⁶ He agrees with Nida in advocating use of a "dynamically equivalent" message to secure a response from the modern recipient that is equivalent to the response of the original recipient to the message. Kraft carries dynamic equivalence beyond transculturation into the realm of theologizing, concluding that the latter is a necessary outgrowth of the former.⁶⁷ He incorporates social custom as so much of a controlling factor in dynamic-equivalence theologizing that matters like the biblical teachings against polygamy and in favor of monogamous church leadership are negated.⁶⁸ This is reminiscent of the hermeneutical use of natural revelation by Mbiti as an authority in the interpretation of the Bible.⁶⁹ Here then is another tie-in between contemporary hermeneutics and dynamic equivalence.

Other Similarities Between Contemporary Hermeneutics and Dynamic Equivalence

A similarity in origin. It seems appropriate to point out the similarity in source between recent hermeneutical trends and dynamic-equivalence techniques. To a large degree, both have originated in circles that might be labeled "missiological," "cross-cultural," or "biblical linguistic." One only needs to mention some of the prominent names from our earlier discussion of hermeneutics

⁶²Ibid., 8.

⁶³M. Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), pp. 63-67, suggests that application is essentially equivalent to allegorical interpretation. This suggestion is interesting but it loses sight of the fact that allegorical interpretation as usually understood does not change from place to place and period to period as practical application does. Rather it attaches itself to the text as a deeper or hidden meaning that is more or less stable.

⁶⁴Gill, "Mediated Meaning" 40.

⁶⁵Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* 284-86. Kraft has a narrower definition of translation: ". . . a translator is not free to provide the degree, extent, and specificity of interpretation required to establish the message solidly in the minds of the hearers. Nor is it within the province of a translator to elaborate on the written message to approximate that of spoken communication" (280).

⁶⁶Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* 281.

⁶⁷Ibid., 291.

⁶⁸C. H. Kraft, "Dynamic Equivalence Churches," *Missiology* 1 (1973) 53-54.

⁶⁹See above p. 15.

illustrate this. Padilla, Kraft, Mbiti, and others in the listed fields have been in the forefront of the contextualization movement that proposes, among other things, the revamping of traditional hermeneutical principles.⁷⁰ As for dynamic equivalence in translation, Nida notes five influences that have changed translation principles in this century.⁷¹ Two of them relate directly to mission organizations, and the other three are indirectly related to mission activities. Grossman comments regarding the mission-oriented origin, giving major credit to biblical linguistics and missions for the insistence that translation be carried out in cultural context. Dynamic equivalence advocates.⁷²

A similarity of subjectivity. We have mentioned previously the contextually dominant approach of contemporary hermeneutics, and have noted the degree of subjectivism promoted thereby.⁷³ A similar subjectivity prevails in dynamic equivalence. The potential for interpretational bias is maximized in the D-E approach.⁷⁴ Fortunately it has not been used often or widely for propagandistic purposes, but D-E translations inevitably encounter criticism in various passages because the interpretations chosen in debated passages will always displease some. This problem is not nearly so characteristic of formal-equivalence translations.

The twelve-year-old *New International Version* furnishes a good means of illustrating the problem created by subjectivity because, though it is a dynamic equivalence translation, strict limitations in its application of D-E principles have greatly reduced its deviations from traditional norms of translation.⁷⁵ In

⁷⁰To the above list other names involved in cross-cultural fields could be mentioned: Caldwell (see "Third Horizon Ethnohermeneutics: Re-Evaluating New Testament Hermeneutical Models for Intercultural Bible Interpreters Today" [paper presented to Consultation of Anthropologists and Theologians, Biola University, April 14-15, 1986] 2), K. Halebian (see "Problem of Contextualization," *Missiology: An International Review* 9/1 [Jan 1983] 99), W. A. Smith (see "Culture and Superculture," *Practical Anthropology* 2 [1955] 58-69), S. G. Lingenfelte (see "Formal Logic or Practical Logic: Which Should Form the Basis for Cross-Cultural Theology" [paper presented at the Consultation of Anthropologists and Theologians, Biola University, April 15, 1986] 2, 21), J. M. Bonino (see *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975] 88-89), and H. M. Conn (see "Contextualization: A New Dimension for Cross-Cultural Hermeneutic," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 14 [1978] 44-45).

⁷¹Nida, *Toward a Science* 21-22. The five influences are the rapidly expanding field of structural linguistics, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (i.e. Wycliffe Bible Translators), the program of the United Bible Societies, the publication *Babel* by the International Federation of Translators, and machine translators. The second and third are mission organizations, and the other three impacted the methodology of these and other mission organizations.

⁷²Grossman, *Translation Debate* 73-74, 75-76.

⁷³See above pp. 159, 163.

⁷⁴Nida, *Toward a Science* 184.

⁷⁵Because of the nature of the limitations observed in producing the NIV, Scott refers to the methodology as "moderate dynamic equivalence" (Scott, *Dynamic Equivalence* 351). J. P. Longenecker, "The New International Version," *ResQ* 24/1 (1981) 6, a member of the NIV translation team, describes the NIV as a compromise between the traditional and the innovative, as sometimes formal and sometimes dynamically equivalent. Yet the purpose of the NIV as stated in its preface, "representing the meaning rather than producing a word-for-word translation, places this version squarely in the category of D-E" ("Preface," *The New International Version Study Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978] 1).

words, it differs radically from the extreme dynamic equivalence of *The C Patch Version*, for example. Nevertheless, there is and has been a steady stream of criticism of NIV renderings. A few illustrations will suffice to show this:

(1) In 1976 Mare raised questions about the NIV rendering of *srj* ("flesh") in 1 Cor 5:5 by "the sinful nature," saying that in this verse it referred to the body.⁷⁶

(2) In 1979 Miller criticized the NIV when it rendered *sk-nvsen* (*esknser* "dwelled") in John 1:12 by "lived for a while." This, he said, goes too far in modifying the reader's interpretation.⁷⁷

(3) In the same year Scaer objected to 1 Peter 2:8b in the NIV as an illustration of how this version is potentially more insidious than the Living Bible because doctrinal problems are less easily recognized.⁷⁸ The rendering, he said, supported Calvin's doctrine of election to damnation.

(4) In 1980 Fee objected to the NIV's rendering of *gynaiKW ptesuai* (*gynaiK haptesthai*, "[good] for a woman not to touch") by "marry" in 1 Cor 7:1.⁷⁹

(5) In 1986 Scott criticized the NIV's handling of a number of passages in Acts (i.e. 2:39; 16:34; 18:8) that in the Greek allow for paedobaptism, a possibility that is excluded by NIV renderings in these places.⁸⁰

(6) Earlier this year, Jeske on behalf of the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary voiced dissatisfaction with the NIV's rendering of Matt 5:32 in both its original form (i.e., "anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery") and in its most recently revised form (i.e., "anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery").

Zondervan, 1985] xi). Kohlenberger calls the NIV a D-E translation (Kohlenberger, *Words* 92). The accuracy of his categorization is confirmed by the extremely complex system of symbols and typefaces used in the exhaustive concordance that attempts to cross-reference the English of the translation with words of the original languages (cf. Edward W. Goodrick and John R. Kohlenberger III, eds., *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990] ix-xxii).

⁷⁶W. H. Mare, "1 Corinthians," *EBC* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976) 217. In a 1984 revision of the text remains the same, but the NIV committee has added two alternatives: "body" and "the flesh." Mare's suggested correction is one of many found in the *Expositor's Commentary* which uses the NIV as its basic text.

⁷⁷Miller, "The *New International Version*" 309. The committee responded by changing the rendering to "made his dwelling" in the 1984 revision.

⁷⁸David P. Scaer, "The New International Version—Nothing New," *CTQ* 43/1 (June 1979) 242. The committee has not yet changed this rendering. Nor have they chosen to change the words "causes her to commit adultery" in Rev 20:4. Scaer objected to these words because of their millennialistic implications.

⁷⁹G. D. Fee, "1 Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV," *JETS* 23/4 (1980), 307-314. The committee has not incorporated his suggested literal rendering of "touch a woman," but has left the text as it was and has added an alternative in the margin which reads "have sexual relations with a woman." In 1990 the committee has gone further and expressed hesitation about D-E in general and the NIV in particular because it found "far too many absolutely wrong exegetical choices . . . locked into the biblical text and left the reader's only option" ("Reflections on Commentary Writing," *TToday* 46/4 [Jan 1990] 388).

⁸⁰Scott, "Dynamic Equivalence" 353-358.

⁸¹Jeske, "Faculty Review" 106-107. This list of NIV criticisms may be lengthened by consulting

Reviewers and exegetes find fault with the NIV as being too interpretive here and there, because interpretation is an inescapable aspect of D-E. Interpretations differ from person to person, no rendering that limits possibilities to a single interpretation will please everyone. Some ask, "Why not the text have been left ambiguous in this case?"⁸² Others suggest dispersion with the D-E approach so that ambiguities in the source text are left ambiguous in the translation throughout.⁸³ After examining how the NIV handles a number of debated passages, some writers suggest that the NIV may have a somewhat "wheeling" strain throughout.⁸⁴

This dissatisfaction stems ultimately from the large subjective element which is inherent in D-E. Here then is another area of kinship with contemporary hermeneutics. Continuing revision committees are at work on the NIV and similar versions to try to weed out unsatisfactory renderings. The general "tightening" trend observable in the recommendations of these committees⁸⁵ is an implicit recognition of the problems raised by subjectivity. The task is endless because of the translation philosophy of D-E translations.

A similarity in theological implications. Another relationship between contemporary hermeneutics and D-E in translation may be detected in the theological implications of each. Some of us have shied away from this subject out of fear of saying too much or of being misunderstood. Yet something of this nature must be discussed.

Nida observes the tendency of those who hold the traditional orthodox view of inspiration to focus attention on the autographs and therefore to favor a formal-equivalence approach to translation.⁸⁶ On the other hand, he sees those who hold to neo-orthodoxy or who have been influenced by neo-orthodoxy as freer in their translations. This, he says, is traceable to neo-orthodoxy's view of inspiration in terms of the response of the receptor with a consequent de-emphasis on the source message.⁸⁷ He and Reyburn make clear that there are exceptions to this rule, however.⁸⁸

Robert P. Martin, *Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989) 41-62.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Scaer, "The New International Version" 243.

⁸⁴Miller, "The *New International Version*" 310; Scott, "Dynamic Equivalence" 361. Kohlenberger, *Words* 66-67, recognizes the problem of the excessive-commentary element in versions such as the Amplified Bible, the Living Bible, and Wuest's Expanded Translation, but he is apparently oblivious to the presence of the same in the NIV. Thomas A. Boogaart criticizes the NIV's sacrifice of faithfulness to the original Hebrew and Greek in the interest of harmonizing different traditions within Scripture and of seeking agreement with various scientific theories ("The New International Version: What Price Harmony?" *Reformed Review* 43/3 [Spring 1990] 189-203).

⁸⁵E.g. Jeske, "Faculty Review" 104; see also Kubo and Specht, *So Many* 82-83, 253-254.

⁸⁶Nida, *Toward a Science* 27.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Nida and Reyburn, *Meaning* 61. Kohlenberger is one of those exceptions when he writes, "I believe in verbal inspiration, but I do not believe a word-for-word translation best honors the authority of Scripture" (Kohlenberger, *Words* 73).

There is little doubt that the assured conviction that the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek autographs of the Bible are inspired, lies behind the dominant formal-equivalence translations throughout the centuries of Christianity. Philoxenian, Harclean, and Palestinian Syriac Versions are early examples of efforts to conform the translation to the original text for this reason.⁸⁹ The theological motive behind this type of translation is obvious.⁹⁰

The presence of such a motive can be seen in the reactionary nature of the early-twentieth-century free translations. Moffatt in the preface of his translation of the NT associates his freedom in translation methodology with being "freed from the influence of the theory of verbal inspiration."⁹¹ Phillips justifies his approach in a similar way in the preface to one of his paraphrases: "Most people, however great their reverence for the New Testament may be, do not hold a word-by-word theory of inspiration. . . ."⁹²

Another symptom of a relaxed attitude toward biblical inspiration is the attitude of D-E advocates toward the source languages of Scripture. Nida and Taber view these languages as being no different from any other languages. They make a strong point that Hebrew and Greek are subject to the same limitations as any other natural language.⁹³ This point is valid, but it is only part of the picture. These biblical languages are the only ones that God chose to communicate in Scripture and are therefore unique among all languages. Why, then, do D-E advocates criticize those who believe in biblical inspiration and put

⁸⁹B. M. Metzger, *The Early Versions of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford, 1977) 65, 69, 80.

⁹⁰de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 10. Carson's statement is surprising: "Why a formal translation is necessarily more in keeping with the doctrine of verbal inspiration, I am quite at a loss to know" (D. A. Carson, *The King James Version Debate* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979] 90). The church has long felt that inspiration elevates the original texts to the point that a translation should reflect as much of them as possible, as reflected in Minkoff's careful analysis of the goals of the translators and Jerome in biblical translation (Minkoff, "Problems" 35-36).

⁹¹J. Moffatt, *The New Testament, A New Translation* (1913) vii.

⁹²J. B. Phillips, *The Gospels Translated into Modern English* (1952) 5. It may be coincidental, but the earliest formulation of D-E theory coincided with the espousal of new theoretical positions regarding inspiration among evangelicals. It was just one year before the appearance of *Toward a Science of Translating* that Earle wrote the following in the *ETS Bulletin*: "The words are not the ultimate reality, but the thoughts which they seek to convey . . ." (R. Earle, *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 6/1 [Winter 1963] 16). He continues by observing that Paul's struggle to find adequate words "accords well with the view of plenary dynamic inspiration much more than it does with plenary verbal inspiration" (*ibid.*).

It was also roughly contemporary with similar developments in other realms. Just seven years after Nida's initial effort at establishing a theoretical basis for D-E, Richard Buffum, in one of his regular columns of the *Los Angeles Times*, wrote, "Contemporary journalism is learning to perceive a subtle spectrum of grays between the old black and white reporting techniques" (R. Buffum, *Los Angeles Times* [Oct 5, 1971]). He defines "subtle spectrum of grays" as a new "kind of pondrous, informed subjectivity" that journalists are using in place of "the old rigidly `objective approach" (*ibid.*).

These other developments probably had nothing directly to do with the development of D-E, but they portray the spirit of the age that indirectly spawned the D-E philosophy.

⁹³Nida and Taber, *The Theory* 7.

languages into a special category because of it,⁹⁴ unless they themselves hold a lower view of biblical inspiration? How, then, can these same authorities in the context of discussing Bible translation insist that anything said in one language can be said in another,⁹⁵ when there is inevitably some loss of meaning in translation from the inspired original into other languages? Is there an evangelical rationale for such emphases?

While opposition by D-E to an evangelical view of inspiration may not be viewed as explicit, there are implications and overtones that raise serious questions. Certainly no doubt can be entertained about the clear evangelical stance of some individuals that have participated in D-E efforts. The question here relates to the foundational philosophy behind D-E.

The same type of questions exists in regard to the hermeneutical employment of contextualization. For example, the position of Charles Kraft regarding the relative nature of all systematic theology⁹⁶ calls into question the traditional doctrine of inspiration with its associated grammatico-historical method of interpretation.⁹⁷ Herein lies another similarity of D-E to contemporary hermeneutics.

The two fields can be tied together even more specifically when, now and then, some of the hermeneutical presuppositions of D-E come to light. For example, Nida and Reyburn appear to be in agreement with Smalley regarding the non-absolute nature of biblical revelation. Smalley elaborates on alleged biblical diversity in such a way as to raise questions about his view of inspiration. He notes that Jesus in the antitheses of Matt 5 revoked the teachings of Moses in the OT and substituted a new standard that was better suited to the Palestinian culture of the first century.⁹⁸ Nida and Reyburn accept this proposition that different cultures have caused contradictory presuppositions in the Bible, citing the same passage as Smalley to prove their assertion.⁹⁹ Other contradictions that they include are the teaching of henotheism in certain parts of the OT and the teaching of monotheism in others, the OT teaching of polygamy as set aside in the NT, and the NT rejection of the OT sacrificial system.¹⁰⁰

If this is not an explicit disavowal of an evangelical view of inspiration, it is at best a foggy representation.

⁹⁴Ibid., 3, 6. In discussing D-E, Kraft rejects "mere literalness even out of reverence for *supposed sacred words* [italics added]" (Kraft, "Dynamic Equivalence" 44). Is this an implicit denial that the words of the original text were inspired?

⁹⁵Ibid., 4.

⁹⁶Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* 291-292.

⁹⁷Article XVIII, "Articles of Affirmation and Denials, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy," International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (Chicago, 1978); Article XV, "Articles of Affirmation and Denials, The Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics," International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (Chicago, 1982).

⁹⁸W. A. Smalley, "Culture and Superculture," *Practical Anthropology* 2 (1955) 60-62; *Christianity in Culture* 126. Evangelical attempts to cope with alleged biblical diversity are usually little more subtle than Smalley's; see Scholer, "Issues" 14-18, and I. H. Marshall, "An Evangelical Approach to Theological Criticism," *Themelios* 13/3 (Apr/May 1988) 79-85.

⁹⁹Nida and Reyburn, *Meaning* 26-27.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

An answer to our initial question of whether D-E is a method of translation or a system of hermeneutics must acknowledge a considerable amount of traditional hermeneutics in the dynamic-equivalence process. The correlation between contemporary hermeneutics and dynamic equivalence is not as conspicuous as the correlation between traditional hermeneutics and dynamic equivalence. Nevertheless, here substantial similarities exist. But even if one cannot agree to the full correlation, as suggested above, he certainly must grant that D-E incorporates a large measure of traditional hermeneutics into its fabric. That being the case, several questions arise.

A Linguistic Question

Nida and other linguistic authorities are quite specific in telling translators to abide by the referential meanings of words, meanings they identify with those found in standard dictionaries.¹⁰¹ In *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* the relevant definition of the word "translation" is, "an act, process, or instance of translating: as **a**: a rendering from one language into another; *also* the product of such a rendering."¹⁰² There is little doubt that, in the minds of most people who use the English language, the term "translation" used in a cross-cultural connection suggests the simple idea of changing from one language into another. Yet that is only one-third of the process of dynamic equivalence, the step that is called "transfer."¹⁰³ The question is then, "Is it proper linguistic practice to use the word 'translation' to describe the product of a D-E exercise?"¹⁰⁴

More recently, de Waard and Nida use "associative meaning" in lieu of "referential meaning" to describe lexical definitions.¹⁰⁵ They point out, for example, the hesitancy of most translators to use "Yahweh" because in the minds of many Christians, it has become associated with a modernistic attitude toward the Bible and God.¹⁰⁶

Should not the same precision be shown in use of the word "translation"? The use of "translation" to include implementation of all the principles of hermeneutics and exegesis reflects an insensitivity to the associative meaning of that word in the minds of most English-speaking people. Perhaps "commentary" is too strong a word to describe a D-E product, but it seems that something such as "cultural translation"¹⁰⁷ or "interpretive translation" would be more in keeping with principles espoused by linguistic authorities.

An Ethical Question

A closely related ethical question may also be raised: Is it honest to tell people what purports to be the closest representation of the inspired text in their own language, something that intentionally maximizes rather than minimizes personal interpretations of the translator or translators?

Graves has observed that every translation is a lie in the sense that there

¹⁰¹Nida, *Toward a Science* 70.

¹⁰²*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1988) 125.

¹⁰³Glassman, *The Translation Debate* 61-63.

¹⁰⁴Glassman equates the verb "translate" with the verb "interpret" in his attempt to show the equality in meaning of "translate" and "paraphrase" (Glassman, *The Translation Debate* 61-63). His definition, however, is limited to the use of "translate" within the same language rather than in connection with different languages. He states his definition in a way that the noun "translation" is hardly ever qualified in general usage in connection with D-E. From the perspective of referential meaning, he fails in this regard to justify the use of "translate" in the senses of "interpretive" and "paraphrase."

¹⁰⁵de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 123-24.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 142.

¹⁰⁷Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* 284-286.

no identical equivalents between languages.¹⁰⁸ This problem is alleviated by the understanding in the minds of most that translation is done by means of dynamic equivalents rather than exact equivalents.¹⁰⁹ But if a translator goes one step further and intentionally incorporates his personal interpretations when he cannot have left many passages with the same ambiguity as the original, has he done anything by those who will use his translation?

It is not our purpose to pursue this ethical question further, but simply to raise it as a matter for possible discussion.

A Practical Question

A last question for consideration relates to the use of a D-E product in ministry: How shall I deal with the problem that the high degree of interpretive freedom in a D-E work makes it unsuitable for close study by those who do not know the original languages?¹¹⁰ The answer to this question will depend on the type of preaching and teaching one does. If his approach is general, dealing only with broad subjects, he perhaps will not be too bothered by this characteristic.

But if he at times treats specific doctrinal issues and wants to stress the accuracy of that detail of the text, the presence of a large interpretive element in his basic message will pose problems. He will inevitably encounter renderings that differ from the view he wants to represent in his message—a problem that is largely precluded by using a formal-equivalence translation. If a preacher has to correct his translation too often, people will soon look upon it as unreliable and reflect doubts about either the translation itself or the larger issue of biblical inspiration.

These are only three questions that emerge because of an intentional incorporation of hermeneutics into the translation process. Others could be proposed. It seems that precision in discussing English versions of the Bible has been largely lost. If more exact terminology is not adopted, the church may someday incur the besetting ailment of a confusion of tongues that is self-inflicted.

¹⁰⁸R. Graves, "The Polite Lie," *The Atlantic* 215 (June 1965) 80.

¹⁰⁹Grossman, *The Translation Debate* 75.

¹¹⁰There is agreement among those who have faced the issue, that free translation and paraphrases are inadequate for those who wish to do a detailed study of the English text (J. P. Long, *The English Bible/From KJV to NIV* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981] 116, 156, 260, 291; Kubo and So, *So Many* 80, 150, 242, 338; W. LaSor, "Which Bible is Best for You?" *Eternity* 25 [Apr. 1974] 29). For a detailed discussion of the "Practical Question," see Robert L. Thomas, "Bible Translations: The Tension Between Exegesis and Expository Preaching," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 1/1 (Spring 1990) 5.