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# INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATIONS OF CHRISTIAN CANONICAL SCRIPTURES

## ABSTRACT

Christian canonical Scriptures may include books from Tanakh, Septuagint and New Testament. Several theories have guided the translation of those books into different languages within the canonical boundaries of Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant churches. Those theories have mostly been more recently inspired by Nida's functional equivalence theory. However, the Skopos or functionalist theory, as championed by Nord, is now emerging as a new approach without necessarily rejecting all the achievements of functional equivalence. This article aims to show how an intercultural approach goes beyond functional and functionalist theories to integrate canonical insights into the production of the Bible translations.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This article aims to show how an intercultural approach goes beyond functional and functionalist theories to integrate canonical insights into the production of the Bible translations. For this reason, the functional, functionalist, and intercultural theories of translation will be examined in relation with their explicit or implicit views on biblical canons. The article comprises four parts, namely canons of Christian Scriptures, functional



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equivalence, Skopos theory, and intercultural translation. All these parts will be addressed by way of an expository method in the sense of expounding an issue under consideration and explaining it (Olford & Olford 1998:4). Occasionally, stating components of the issue at stake will suffice for its understanding. The target audience of this article includes Bible translation theorists and practitioners.

## 2. CANONS OF CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES

Four edited books present the most updated research on Christian Biblical canons (McDonald & Sanders 2002; Auwers & De Yonge 2003; Loba Mkole 2016a; McDonald 2017). Canonical criticism uses either an extrinsic (diachronic) method or an intrinsic (synchronic) approach or both (Loba Mkole 2016b: 251). One of the most important outcomes of these studies pertains to the diversity of scriptures and canons. The first collections of Christian Scriptures, which were made up of the Greek translation of the OT books (LXX) and the Greek New Testament, are diverse.<sup>1</sup> They vary according to the number and order of books. Similarly, the first canonical or authoritative lists of Christian Scriptures are equally diverse. They vary in terms of the order and the number of books recorded.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church abides by the Carthage Canon, reconfirmed during the Council of Trent. The Greek Orthodox Church, in general, favours the Laodicea Canon, with some additions taken from the Trullo Synod, while the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church goes by the Fetḥa Nagast canonical statement. The Protestant Church goes by La Rochelle/Westminster Confession. Each book included in a particular canon or in a church canonical statement is authoritative for the intended audience. Consequently, a given canonical list or a Christian Bible published by a Christian publisher does not or shall not label some books as “proto-canonical” and “deutero-canonical”. These expressions, more spread in theological/exegetical writings, are questionable, if not inappropriate and misleading (Kerber 2016a:182; Loba Mkole 2016a:113, 116). As Charlesworth (2017:xiv) puts it:

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- 1 Sinaiticus and Vaticanus of the fourth century CE and Alexandrinus of the fifth century CE.
  - 2 The Canon of Laodicea/Trullo in 363/691 (79 biblical books); the Fetḥa Nagast Canon in 1240 (81 biblical books); the Canon of Carthage Synod in 397/the Council of Trent in 1551 (73 biblical books); the Canon of La Rochelle in 1559/the Westminster Canon in 1647 (66 biblical books).

There is no doubt that the Bible, however defined, is heralded as revelatory and definitive for belief and action by Jews and Christians, no matter how diverse.

The intercultural method, as advocated in this article, respects the biblical canons of different church traditions, as it takes them integrally into account in its exegetical, canonical and translational approaches. The current study focuses on the latter.

### 3. FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENCE

Functional equivalence translation theory is associated with Nida who became an icon for many scholars in translation studies. This theory consists of

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

For reproducing the message, one must make the necessary grammatical and lexical adjustments. For instance, the Greek expression *σπλάγχνα οίκτιρμοῦ* (literally, bowels of mercy) in Colossians 3:12 may be lexically adjusted to functionally communicate in English the sense of heart of mercy, compassion, or kindness. Such adjustment derives from a careful rendering of the most suitable synonym in the semantic domain and the literary context of the text concerned. It is to be noted that De Waard & Nida (1986:vii-viii) replaced the qualifier dynamic with functional to avoid the misunderstanding attached to the former as “referring to anything which might have special impact and appeal for receptors”.

Nida’s success emerges at least from three angles: the impressive number of the Bible translation projects he birthed worldwide, the tremendous translation helps he has sponsored, and the ongoing development of his translation model. Indeed, this model is widely applied and assessed (Porter & Hess 1999:18-45; Porter 2009:117-118; Gentzler 1993:4; Mojola & Wendland 2003:1; Stine 2004; 2005:7; 2012:38; Loba Mkole 2013:98).

Even if Nida’s functional equivalence has been institutionalised by the United Bible Societies (UBS) as a model for the Bible translation (Mojola & Wendland 2003:1-4), its achievement is credited to the Knox Bible translation. The latter is commended particularly for its attempt to render in English the acrostic form of Psalm 119, whereby each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew takes turns in starting a number of verses. It has

omitted the English letters q, x, and y (lipogram) (Boswell 2004/2007:466). Further details of functional equivalence are discussed below.

### 3.1 Receptor language and source-language message

Reproducing a message or text necessarily implies the existence of a source text or message that is to be rendered into a target text. Message and text can be used interchangeably. They may allude to distinct entities such as a container (text) and the content (message), but they cannot be accessed separately. Indeed, the term “reproducing” entails not only creating, but also recreating something from an existing one. Bible translators may face more challenges when they are not well-informed about the grammar of their language, and the nature of the source text, including its canonical frame. In practice, several Bible translators reproduce either the literal translation (base text) or the common language translation (model text), or a hybrid translation. None of these three ways can genuinely claim to be a functional equivalence, as they violate the theory by not representing “both the linguistic form and the ideational content of the source text” (De Waard & Nida 1986:i, viii, 13). It goes without saying that one is allowed to consult many other sources and advice for a better understanding of the “original” source text. As far as the receptor language is concerned, a functional equivalence translation cannot justify cases where a source language text is reproduced *verbatim* in meaningless target texts. The same applies for cases where meaningful target texts are used in the translation, while they have no literary, corresponding word or expression in the source text.

In fact, the base/model method (Sterk 1984:112-122; 1990:101-121) has contributed in encouraging the translator to generate, from a literal translation (base) and a common language translation (model), the meaning to be translated into a receptor language. Yet, what the source text means can be more correctly understood by what it says: “The translator should work with the ‘codes’ in the text and reflect it in the translation” (Van der Watt 2002:252). Ideally, form and content, text and meaning, or the signifier and the signified must go hand in hand. A divorce between them will not go without harm.

### 3.2 Equivalence is neither identity nor inference

The relationship between the source text and the target text is to be viewed not in terms of identity, but in terms of equivalence. The latter emphasises the fact that the form of a source text may not be entirely preserved in the target text, but the meaning that nevertheless connects with the source text must be retained as much as possible (Nida & Taber 1969:12). However,

functional equivalence has been accused of operating on an odd linguistic pattern: a “unique intertextual relation that only translations, among all conceivable text types, are expected to show” (Steccconi 2007:164-165). For Steccconi (2007:165), equivalence can be represented by the formula  $A=B$ , “where A is an element in the original and B is its equivalent in the translation”. He points out that A and B are elements that exist in the source and target semiotic systems before a translation project gets started. The inference formula consists of  $A \Rightarrow B$ , if A tends to become B, in the presence of factors x, y and z. These factors “account for the translation’s ground and goal of interpretation and collateral observation” (Steccconi 2007:165). Thus, the “inference translation” implies choosing a satisfactory B as equivalent of A. In fact, Steccconi (2007:265) recognises that “inferences tend to stabilise into equivalences over time. This makes the work of the translators feasible, because we do not have to always establish fresh equivalences.”

Nonetheless functional equivalence is not identity as such, much less an identity that may be represented by the formula  $A=B$ . Words are culturally determined. They are conventional symbols (Nida 2007:16) that would be nearly impossible to translate by applying the identity formula. Besides, as a strategy of reproducing the meaning of a source text, functional equivalence does not necessarily entail translating the inference. It encourages not to translate inferences of the source text, but to render the latter in a way that the translation can have a similar inference as the source text. In this instance, equivalence represents a particular way of translating which Wendland (2004) more clearly advocates in terms of “literary functional equivalence”. It might seem “impossible” with the form, but possible “in the field of meaning or intent” (Sterk 2007:140). Yet, it is not quite impossible to achieve equivalence even with the form of the text.<sup>3</sup> In short, equivalence cannot be replaced by inference, as the former strives to preserve the intended meaning through form and content, because they are intertwined and none of them is to be easily dismissed (Boswell 2004/2007:469).

### 3.3 Equivalence as similarity and difference

Similarity (likeness) and difference (otherness) can be relevant cognitive categories that might help one understand the concept of equivalence. Albaladejo (2004/2007:458) rightly argues:

Similarity and difference coexist necessarily in the relationship between source text and target text. Similarity and translation are

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3 See the rendering of Psalm 119 in the Knox Bible translation.

the consequence of the act of meeting of languages, literatures and cultures that constitutes literary translation ... Literary translation is a dialogue between source languages and target language ... This dialogue exists because it is basically a dialogue between target text and source text.

If similarity and difference would happen to be central to any translation model, including equivalence and inference, there is no need for any of these two models to replace the other. After all, the notion of equivalence and that of inference are not contradictory, but complementary and overlapping.

### 3.4 Natural closest equivalent in terms of meaning and style

The corresponding rendering of a source text in a target language should not exhibit linguistic awkwardness or strangeness. It should sound usual, while being the most salient representative of the source texts both in terms of meaning and style (content and form). In that sense, “the best translation does not sound like a translation” (Nida & Taber 1969:12).

The definition of translation in the perspective of equivalence theory has been accused of viewing communication as the conduit metaphor:

The definition assumes ... that we have access to the pure, objective meaning of the source language text for which there is the closest equivalent in another language (Mojola & Wendland 2003:7).

Nida’s emphasis on the meaning and style “can be understood as a way of identifying a central member or a salient feature of a cognitive category” (Loba Mkole 2008:117). Besides, this salient feature is to be conveyed in a way that reflects its form or style, on the other. A conduit metaphor seems odd for describing functional equivalence, since a conduit would transfer and deliver its content to the recipient the way it was packaged and packed by the sender. This contradicts the very definition of the functional equivalence.

### 3.5 Criteria for functional equivalence

Functional equivalence advocates for three translation criteria, namely fidelity, clarity, and naturalness. Fidelity means both formal and meaningful consistency with the source text. Ideally, the latter is to be a text in the original language; by default, a given translation can also play the role of the source text. The criteria of clarity and naturalness concern the target language. In other words, the translated text should be clear and sound natural.

### 3.6 Basic choices regarding the type of language to use

#### 3.6.1 Literal translation

Literal translation is a formal representation of the source text. Literal translation is not a synonym of literary translation, as the latter refers to the translation of any written text.

#### 3.6.2 Common language translation

This refers to ordinary language that is used by the majority of the target audience. Common language translation is not a synonym of functional equivalence, as the latter may opt to use a common language or a more sophisticated type of language.

#### 3.6.3 Liturgical translation

This refers to language used by a church tradition for the rituals. Linguistic choices made for church rituals are not necessarily the natural closest equivalents of biblical concepts.

### 3.7 Priority principles

Priority principles include the following: contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency; functional equivalence has priority over formal correspondence; the aural form of language has priority over the written form, and forms used by the target audience have priority over traditionally prestigious forms (Nida & Taber 1969:14). Even if a functional equivalence has priority over a formal correspondence, it still has to be closely supported by the literary form of the source text.

### 3.8 Set of principles of translation

Below is a sample-set of principles that “were worked out at a translators’ seminar held in Turfloop, South Africa, in July 1967” (Nida & Taber 1969:181).

#### 3.8.1 Text

The source text for the Old Testament and that of the New Testament ought to be the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) and the UBS Greek New Testament (GNT), respectively. It is understood that the chosen source text should be in the form of its more recent and reliable edition. However, it is with the humanistic reformed view of Christian Scriptures that the Hebrew Text for the Old Testament books was emphasised in biblical exegesis and translation. This emphasis has

diverted attention from the fact that the Bible of the authors and earliest readers of the New Testament writings was a Greek Bible, not a Hebrew one (De Lang 2017:197).

Besides,

for better understanding of the New Testament, a translation of the Old Testament from the LXX would perhaps make more sense (De Lang 2017:197-198).

Moreover, not only the first Christian Scripture collections for both Old and New Testament books are in Greek (Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Alexandrinus), but the early Scripture canons (Laodicea/Trullo and Carthage) also include a great deal of their contents. Since the authority of biblical books is recognised through their canonical listing, the canon, to which the chosen source text belongs, needs to be explicitly stated and unambiguously respected. This is one of the perspectives that an intercultural approach to Biblical canons is emphasizing.

### 3.8.2 Exegesis

The analysis and understanding of the text to be translated are to be supported by UBS-recommended commentaries and translations.

### 3.8.3 Form of language

Different forms of language of the original language need to be represented in the translated text. Some of them may require specific rendering techniques. For example, vocabulary and grammatical forms must reflect the different style of language in Scriptures. In the case of genuine ambiguity in the source or in the target texts, one alternative is to be given in the text and the other in the margin. Proper names need to be transcribed on the basis of the receptor-language phonological structures; they may, however, follow the usage of the dominant language. Supplementary information, where needed, should be provided in marginal notes, glossary, geographical maps, table of historical events, table of weights and measures, and so forth (Nida & Taber 1969:282-283).

### 3.8.4 Basic drafts

The translation process includes four drafts of which the first one originates from the initial drafter, while the second one is the result of an internal review by the editorial committee members. The third draft involves an external review carried out by review and consultative groups. The review committee group includes reviewers, stylists, manuscript examiners, technical consultants (specialists in exegesis and style), and political

consultants (representatives of different constituencies). The fourth draft consists of a final proofreading by the translators and approval by the technical consultants.

### 3.8.5 Discussions and decision-making

Discussions are meant to focus on problems representing significant differences of opinion where an explicit consensus of the editorial committee members is expected. Besides, this committee has to read together the entire text in order to address anything missed by the first drafter. Furthermore, it seeks the attention of the technical and political consultants to address any unresolved issues.

### 3.8.6 Basic principles of organisation structure

The editorial committee is to be structured in a way that would allow the team to work more effectively, taking into account the following principles:

- The authority and responsibility for translation work have to be assigned to the same individuals.
- Both a technical and a political consultant are required.
- A thoroughly competent stylist is equally required.
- Members of the review committee and consultative group are to submit their comments in writing.
- All members of the editorial committee have to take part in producing drafts.
- Various committees and groups are to be named by a central authority, based on their competence and not on their representation of a particular constituency.
- Every translation programme should have a well-defined set of principles and procedures (cf. translation brief in terms of Skopos-theory).

### 3.8.7 Basic ingredients in the work of Bible translation

The following ingredients can boost the ethics of the teamwork: humility (essential quality for true scholarship); openness to suggestions; spiritual sensitivity; deep reverence for the message, and evangelical spirit. In a concluding remark, Nida and Taber (1969:188) note that

the real problems of the translation are not technical, they are human; and the ultimate solutions involve the transformation of the human spirit.

### 3.9 Findings

Nida's functional equivalence theory is comprehensive with regard to its clear definition and procedures. Although it has been adopted by the United Bible Societies, its best achievement happened outside this institution, namely the rendering of Psalm 119 in the Knox Bible translation. There is still room for many translation projects to improve on their understanding and application of Nida's functional equivalence. It has been misunderstood, with the term *dynamic* to mean any target culture-oriented paraphrase; this misunderstanding might still persist even after the change from dynamic to functional. It did not discuss the issue of the Bible Canons. However, its recommendation for using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the UBS Greek text as source texts implies an implicit preference for the La Rochelle/Westminster Canon (Protestant Church).

## 4. SKOPOS THEORY OR FUNCTIONALIST THEORY

Nord (1997) develops the Skopos theory in the framework of the "German school of functionalist translation theory", which is grounded on research works by Katharina Reis (1984), Hans J. Vermeer (1978; 1983; 1986); and Justa Holz-Mänttari (1984). For Nord (1997:27; 2006:131-146; 2016:21-41), the Skopos or purpose is what primarily determines a translation endeavour. This theory has been successfully applied in the biblical field with regard to the New Testament translation and exegesis (Berger & Nord 2005; Chung 2017). Yet, it is noteworthy to mention that Skopos theory and functional equivalence are both parts of functionalism that studies translation "from the perspective of function or functions of texts, although they are somewhat different" (Zheng 2018:624). Nord's understanding of the basic concepts and principles of Skopos theory is described below.

### 4.1 Basic concepts

#### 4.1.1 Skopos

The term "skopos" in Greek means purpose. It acts as the prime principle of "determining any translation process" (Nord 1997:27).

#### 4.1.2 The aim

This refers to "the final result an agent intends to achieve by means of an action" (Vermeer 1986:236; Nord 1997:28) or "the purpose for which it is needed or supposed to be needed" (Nord 1997:28).

### 4.1.3 The purpose

This means “a provisional stage in the process of attaining an aim” (Nord 1997:28).

### 4.1.4 Function

Function applies to “what a text means or is intended to mean from the receiver’s point of view” (Nord 1997:28).

### 4.1.5 Intention

Intention is an “aim-oriented action” (Vermeer 1978/1983:41) on the part of both the sender and the receiver pointing toward a particular way of producing or understanding the text (Vermeer 1986:414; Nord 1997:28). Besides, intention can be understood as a function of the action (Reiss & Vermeer 1984:96).

### 4.1.6 Translation brief

This refers to an agreement that “specifies what kind of translation is needed” (Nord 1997:30). It has to indicate at least the intended text function, the target text addressee, the prospective time and place of text reception and the motive for the production or reception of the text (Nord 1997:32,60).

### 4.1.7 Skopos rule

This rule requires the translation to be done in a way that enables the target text “to function in the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it” (Vermeer 1989: 20, quoted in Nord 1997:29). For Nord (1997:29), this rule can solve dilemmas of “free vs faithful translation, dynamic vs formal equivalence, good interpreters vs slavish translators, and so on”. One has to bear in mind that “dynamic equivalence” is to be understood as functional equivalence (De Waard & Nida 1986:i, viii, 13). Furthermore, Nord prefers using the expression “loyal translation” instead of “faithful translation”, since she does not expect a human translator to be faithful to a text because, for her, the category of faithfulness is appropriate for relationships between human beings, such as a wife and her husband. However, the Skopos rule means that a given translation “may require a ‘free’ or a ‘faithful’ translation, or anything between these two extremes, depending on the purpose” (Nord 1997:29). Nonetheless, it does not mean that “a good translation should ipso facto conform or adapt to target-culture behaviour or expectations, although the concept is often misunderstood in this way” (Nord 1997:29).

## 4.2 Other specific concepts

### 4.2.1 Intratextual and intertextual coherence

Intratextual coherence implies that the target text should be at least likely meaningful to target-culture receivers. The latter should be able to understand it, as it makes sense to their communicative situation and culture (Nord 1997:32). On the other hand, intertextual coherence refers to “fidelity rule” (Reiss & Vermeer 1984:113) between the source text and the target text. It is important to note that

intertextual coherence should exist between source text and target text, while the form it takes depends both on the translator’s interpretation of the source text and on the translation Skopos (Nord 1997:32).

### 4.2.2 Culture and culture-specificity

Culture is a complex system of values determining any human action or behaviour (Vermeer 1986:178; Nord 1997:33). Since translation is an intercultural phenomenon, “translators interpret source-culture phenomena in the light of their own culture-specific knowledge of that culture” (Nord 1997:34). Some phenomena are culture-specific (culturemes) in the sense that they are found in culture X and not in culture Y (Nord 1997:33).

### 4.2.3 Adequacy and equivalence

#### Adequacy

refers to the qualities of a target text with regard to the translation brief: the translation should be ‘adequate to’ the requirements of translation brief (Nord 1997:35).

Equivalence is viewed as “a static, result-oriented describing a relationship of ‘equal communicative value’ between two texts” (Nord 1997:34-35). In other words, it is the purpose of the translation that “determines the form of equivalence required for an adequate translation” (Nord 1997:36). At this juncture, one may realise, that firstly the concept of equivalence has not been totally removed from the Skopos translation theory. Secondly, the form of equivalence is determined by three criteria: the faithfulness to the content and the style of the source text, as well as the clarity and naturalness of the target text. Indeed, the particular content and style of a source text will lead to a particular equivalent target text. Thus, equivalence translation is not adequately represented when described as “static, result-oriented”, even

if it endeavours to yield in the target texts communicative values that are similar to those of the source texts.

#### 4.2.4 Text classification

Texts are classified at least into three types: informative or referential text, expressive text, and operative text (Reiss & Vermeer 1984:156, quoted by Nord 1997:37-38), to which Nord (1997:41) has added some nuances and more types such as appellative function text, and phatic function text. She also includes covert and overt translation, as well as documentary vs instrumental translation.

- Informative/referential texts aim to tell the reader about real or fictitious objects and phenomena of the world.
- Expressive texts complete or overthrow the informative aspects with aesthetic and psychological components.
- Operative texts subordinate both their content and form to the intended, extralinguistic effects (Nord 1997:38).
- Appellative function texts intend to induce the target audience to respond in a particular way.
- Phatic function texts are to establish, maintain or end contacts with the receivers (Nord 1997:43-44).
- Covert translation is specifically directed at the target-language community.
- Overt translation is tied with the source-language community (House 1977/1981:189, 194, quoted by Nord 1997:46).
- Documentary translation intends to convey in a target language a
  - document in which a source culture sender communicates with a source culture audience via the source text under source-culture conditions (Nord 1997:47).
- Documentary translation forms include philological/learned translations, interlinear translations, literal/grammatical translations, and foreignising/exoticising translations (Nord 1997:49-50).
- Instrumental translation endeavours to produce, in the target language, an instrument for interaction “between the source-culture sender and the target-culture audience, using (certain aspects of) the source text as a model” (Nord 1997:47). Instrumental forms consist of equifunctional, heterofunctional, and homologous translations. Equifunctional translations achieve the same functions as an original text. In heterofunctional

translations, source-text and target-text functions differ (Nord 1997:50). Homologous translations are semiotic transformations or creative transpositions where the target text represents the same degree of originality as the original with regard to the respective culture-specific corpora of texts (Nord 1997:52).

#### 4.2.5 Basic principles

Nord (1997:143) proposes some basic principles to guide a functionalist translation.

- **Functionality:** The translation purpose determines the choice of translation method and strategy.
- **Loyalty:** The acceptability of translation purposes is limited by the translator's responsibility with regard to her/his partners in the cooperative activity of translation.
- **Target situation:** The translation purpose is defined by the translation brief, which implicitly or explicitly describes the situation and mostly the functions for which the target text is needed.
- **Receiver's role vis-à-vis the functionality:** Function is not a quality of a text in itself, but one that is attributed to the text by the receiver. The receiver then decides whether (and how) a text "functions" (for her/him, in this situation).
- **Receiver's recognition of the linguistic and extralinguistic marker codes:** Translators aim to create a text in a way that the receivers recognise the functions for which it is intended, accepting it as functional precisely for those functions. To this end, they use linguistic and extralinguistic "function markers" that the receivers can correctly interpret, if they are familiar with the "marker code" concerned.
- **Hierarchy of functions:** The function of the target text may differ from that of the source text, "as long as it is not contradictory to, or incompatible with, the source text author's communicative intention(s)" (Nord 1997:143). In this regard, the source text has not been dethroned; it still remains the basis of the information to be conveyed through the target text.

## 5. FINDINGS

Findings about functional equivalence include the following:

- The Skopos theory's understanding of translation activity as "primarily determined by its purpose" describes the place of emphasis more than what the theory is and does. However, its golden rule clearly specifies the theory's nature and action: "Translate in a way that enables your text translation to function in the situation in which it is used."
- The best achievements of functionalist translation include the Berger/ Nord New Testament translation and Chung's study on the Matthean Gospel in light of the Skopos theory.
- The Skopos theory has not totally moved away from the equivalence theory, as it renders equivalence by adequacy and still uses the former to qualify some translation forms and functions. Both the Skopos theory and functional equivalence are functional approaches.
- The Skopos theory has been misunderstood as "mere" conformity with the receivers' behaviours and expectations, relatively similar misunderstanding that arose about functional equivalence.
- The Skopos theory does not explicitly propose nor discuss any canonical source texts as appropriate for the Bible translation; however, the translation brief would determine the intended canon.

## 6. INTERCULTURAL TRANSLATION

### 6.1 Notion

Every translation, including a Bible translation, is an intercultural mediation. An intercultural Bible translation is closely related to intercultural biblical exegesis and intercultural biblical canonicity. An intercultural translation refers to a constructive narrative involving the creation of a contemporary target text from a source culture text, as understood in its own original cultures, its intermediate cultures and in the current target cultures (Loba Mkole 2013; 2016c). An intercultural biblical exegesis is the constructive representation of the source text culture through a target audience culture, taking into account critically assessed interpretations of a church culture (Loba Mkole 2004; 2005a; 2005b, 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011; 2013; 2014; 2016a,b,c; 2017). An intercultural biblical canonicity is an intercultural approach to biblical canons; as the nature and scope of the latter are viewed, their nature and scope in dialogue with the original biblical cultures, church cultures and target contemporary

cultures (Manus 2003; Loba Mkole 2016b). In any case, culture means not only an artistic component of a society, but also a totality of a human experience in a given time and space. It is never holistically apprehended once and for all, but it allows itself to be progressively accessed through languages. This notion of intercultural mediation moves beyond that used by functional approaches, as it integrates church cultures, including the biblical canons as defined in particular church traditions.

Intercultural mediation is interchangeable with intercultural construction and intercultural narrative. However, the expression “intercultural construction” indicates that, in Africa, intercultural mediation integrates two major paradigms of African theology, namely “inculturation” and “construction” that participate in the building of a new culture with components taken from other cultures. Intercultural narrative in Africa evokes the same agenda of creating a new culture from different cultures, as a continuation of religious narratives that began with African ancestral times. In short, intercultural mediation, construction or narrative has become an interpretative tool for disciplines such as biblical exegesis, Bible translation, and biblical canonicity among others.

## 6.2 Basic components

My views on intercultural mediations have progressively revolved around the notion of a constructive dialogue involving a hexagonal trilogy (six core elements of three sets each), namely a triple pitfall to be avoided and five triple elements to take into account. These include a triple frame of reference, a triple epistemological privilege, a triple epistemological value, a triple ethical value, and a triple cultural scope.

### 6.2.1 Triple pitfall

Intercultural mediation strives to circumvent a triple pitfall: cultural juxtaposition (side by side co-existence with no sincere dialogue between cultures concerned), cultural assimilation (mixing of cultures), and cultural resignation (denial of one’s own culture) (Tshiamalenga 1981:71-80).

### 6.2.2 Triple frame of reference

The triple frame of reference of the intercultural mediation includes original biblical cultures, church cultures, and contemporary target cultures.

### 6.2.3 Triple epistemological privilege

Intercultural mediation operates with a triple epistemological privilege granted to each of the triple frame of reference. A unique epistemological privilege of canonicity (normative status of the Word of God) is given to

the original biblical cultures, because they contain authoritative books for ruling in matters of faith and conduct. A unique privilege of elderliness (seniority status) is conferred to the church cultures, because they shape the original biblical cultures through the fixation of the biblical canons, on the one hand, and spiritually engender their target contemporary cultures through evangelisation ministry, on the other. A unique epistemological privilege of liveliness (vitality status of a living person) is bestowed upon the target contemporary cultures, because they revitalise the original biblical cultures and the church cultures.

### 6.2.4 Triple epistemological value

Intercultural mediation embraces a triple epistemological value: a target culture worldview (what is valuable is that which promotes life), a message from the historical Jesus (what is valuable is that which concurs with a message of the historical Jesus), and a Christian culture value (what is valuable is that which is in consonance with the church's critically assessed culture).

### 6.2.5 Triple ethical value

Intercultural mediation promotes a triple ethical value: accuracy to the original biblical culture (ethics of accurate representation), loyalty to the current target culture (ethics of service), and honesty toward a critically assessed church culture (ethics of sincerity).

### 6.2.6 Triple cultural scope

Intercultural mediation integrates a triple cultural scope: current cultural locations of the mediator, his/her horizontal cultures, and vertical cultures. Current cultural locations of the mediator refer to diverse situations in which the mediator lives. The horizontal intercultural scope deals with the experiences between neighbouring cultures and the target culture, while the vertical intercultural scope applies to the interplay between the mediator's present target culture, its past, and its future. The term "mediator" is interchangeable with intercultural mediator, intercultural builder, and intercultural narrator.

### **6.3 Procedures for intercultural exegesis, intercultural translation and intercultural canonicity**

An intercultural paradigm and method may apply to three distinct but closely related areas, namely biblical exegesis, Bible translation, and biblical canonicity. Below are the procedures for each area.

#### **6.3.1 Procedures of intercultural biblical exegesis**

- Self-introduction by the exegete in terms of her/his cultural positions.
- Describing and discussing the main interpretation of the chosen text for the current target culture.
- Describing and discussing parallel interpretations of the chosen text for the current target culture.
- Describing and discussing the main interpretation in the past church culture.
- Describing and discussing parallel interpretations in the past church culture.
- Describing and discussing the main text chosen from the original biblical culture within its canonical contexts.
- Describing and discussing parallel texts in the original biblical culture.
- Establishing the similitude and difference between the texts of the original biblical culture, the interpretations of the church culture and those of the target culture, followed by a way forward, in other words, a new synthesis of those interpretations, including their epistemological and ethical values.

#### **6.3.2 Procedures of intercultural Bible translation**

- Introducing the cultural positions of the type of translation to be undertaken, as well as defining its epistemological and ethical values.
- Describing and discussing the main type of target translation to be undertaken.
- Describing and discussing parallel texts to compare with the main target translation in making.
- Describing and discussing the main, church-canonised translation of the past.

- Describing and discussing translations parallel to the main church-canonised translation.
- Describing and discussing the main source text from biblical original culture within its canonical contexts.
- Describing and discussing parallel original texts of the main source text within their canonical contexts.
- Translating the main source text into the target language (an intercultural narrative) that critically and coherently reflects the chosen original biblical culture, the church culture, and the contemporary target culture. The actual task of intercultural Bible translation integrates functional equivalence theory and complements it by both recognising unity and diversity of biblical canons and involving the Church culture as a frame of reference.

### 6.3.3 Procedures of intercultural canonicity

- Self-introduction by the exegete in terms of her/his cultural positions.
- Describing and discussing the main biblical canon of the present target culture.
- Describing and discussing parallel canons in the present target culture.
- Describing and discussing the main canon of the past church culture.
- Describing and discussing parallel canons of the past church culture.
- Describing and discussing the main canon of an original biblical culture.
- Describing and discussing parallel canons of an original biblical culture.
- Establishing the similitudes and differences between the canons and proposing as a way forward the canon of reference for the current target culture.

## 6.4 Interconnection between intercultural translation, intercultural exegesis and intercultural canonicity

An intercultural translation is blended with intercultural exegesis and intercultural biblical canonicity, as the three aspects are closely related. Indeed, canonical contexts are integral parts of intercultural exegesis and intercultural translation. Besides, for Christian biblical canons, the interculturality or intertextuality between Old Testament and New Testament means that the Old Testament supplies the New Testament with its normative theological and historical markers. Similarly, the New Testament

witness to the risen Messiah supplies the subject matter for a Christian hermeneutic whereby the Old Testament becomes Christian Scripture (Wall 2008:536-537; Loba Mkole 2016b:252).

Through an intercultural exegesis and intercultural translation of the name Jesus, I have noted a striking lexical mismatch between its Greek, Latin and Swahili translations (Loba Mkole 2013). The original and meaningful form of Jesus' name is the Hebrew or Aramaic יהושע *Yehoshua* or ישוע *Yeshua* (God saves). However, ספר הבריתות ספר (the book of covenants 2010) has consistently translated the NT ὁ Ἰησοῦς with the Hebrew ישוע *Yeshua* thus achieving coherence in translating with one name throughout the whole Bible. The Latin "Iesu" and the Swahili "Yesu"/"Yezu" stand as transliterations of the meaningless Greek ὁ Ἰησοῦς. In Latin church culture, the meaning of a proper name in itself may not be that important, but in the Swahili target culture a proper name ought to be meaningful and informative. Consequently, the Swahili transliterations *Yehoshua* or *Yeshua* of the Hebrew יהושע *Yehoshua* or ישוע *Yeshua* would be a more considerate rendering of Jesus' name in view of the target culture frame and that of the most original biblical culture.

De Vries (2017:241-279) applies intercultural mediation for translating John 2:1-12, combining insights from Skopos, script, layers of culture, and anthropological linguistics. He has identified three major categories of differences in need of mediation: concepts, norms and values, and cultural pragmatics. He then illustrated the conceptual domain with the exegesis and translation of the word "glory", while "wine" and "drunkenness" were examples of the intercultural mediation of norms and values. The section on "mother" and "woman" in the Cana story exemplified the domain of cultural pragmatics.

To highlight the interconnection between intercultural biblical translation, exegesis and canonicity, Bibles in Africa may be produced with titles such as: *The Holy Bible. Carthage Canon* (for Roman Catholics), *The Holy Bible According to Fetha Nagast* (for Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church), and *The Holy Bible According to Westminster Confession* (or *La Bible selon la Confession de la Rochelle*) (for Protestant Church).

## 6.5 Findings

This article has resulted in three findings. First, intercultural Bible translation recognises the diversity of biblical canons and encourages each translation project to explicitly state the biblical canon according to which the biblical books are being translated. Secondly, intercultural translation is blended with intercultural exegesis and intercultural canonicity. Thirdly,

studies in intercultural exegesis and intercultural canonicity, as well as intercultural Bible translation projects are still in the early but promising stages of development.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Nida's functional equivalence theory happens to be part of Skopos translation and that of intercultural translation models. A better understanding of it would enhance both its success and that of translation projects using Skopos or intercultural translation models. Functional equivalence did not discuss the issue of the biblical Canons. However, its recommendation for using the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* and the UBS Greek text as source texts implies his implicit preference for La Rochelle/Westminster Canon (Protestant Church). Skopos theory, in turn, does not explicitly propose nor discuss any canonical source texts as appropriate for Bible translation, because the translation brief would determine the appropriate canon. Intercultural Bible translation recognises the diversity of biblical canons and encourages each translation project to explicitly state the biblical canon according to which the sacred books are being or have been translated. Besides, misleading expressions such as Bible with Deutero-canonical books and alike will be laid to rest, and the diversity of the Christian Bibles and Biblical Canons will clearly be recognised.

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