Loyalty and Liberation: *Skopos* Theory's Ethic in Dialogue with Contextual Bible Study's Commitments[1]

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Christiane Nord's ethic of translator loyalty could be invigorated in African Bible translation by engaging the social commitments of Contextual Bible Study, a practice of Bible reading and action developed in South Africa. After describing Nord's concept of loyalty and its prevalence in African Bible translation, the paper notes the challenge of practicing loyalty amidst complex power dynamics in the post-colonial context of Ghana. The paper then imagines how Christiane Nord's four poles of translator loyalty could be reconfigured if they included the social commitments and interpretative practices of Contextual Bible Study. The goal is to situate translators so they can produce a translation that offers details from critical scholarship and from actual Contextual Bible Study experiences which marginalised groups in their audience may find liberating. An experimental English translation of Job 3 is included for reference.

KEYWORDS: translation ethics; skopos theory; Contextual Bible Study (CBS); liberation hermeneutics; post-colonial; sacred text translation

A   INTRODUCTION

Bible translation practitioners and theorists, active in various parts of the African continent, have been utilising functionalist translation concepts like the translation brief[2] and translator loyalty[3] to help negotiate the ethical complexities of multiple interests and possibilities inherent in translation.[4]

[1]   An earlier version of this paper was presented at The Bible Translation 2015 Conference, Dallas Texas, October 16-20, 2015.

[2]   Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 30.

[3]   Nord, *Translating*, 123-125.

[4]   Jacobus A. Naudé, "An Overview of Recent Developments in Translation Studies with Special Reference to Its Implications for Bible Translation," *AcT* 22 (2002): 44-69; Christo van der Merwe, "A New Translation of the Bible into Afrikaans: A Theoretical and Practical Orientation," (paper presented at the UBS Triennial

Functionalism is a broad term for theories and approaches to translation that focus on the function(s) of texts and translations.[5] *Skopos* theory, a key approach in the development of functional translation, suggests that the most important factor in guiding translation decisions should be the *skopos*, the aim or purpose of the translation.[6] While some aspects of functionalism open up welcome space in African contexts, the post-colonial realities of African contexts also present some challenges for the implementation of functionalist models (see Section 2).

1   Ethical concerns, Practicing Translator Loyalty in Africa

The history of colonialism in Africa, and the ongoing involvement of international Bible translation agencies in African translations, cause some Bible translation practitioners to be concerned about translation ethics. Within functionalist approaches to translation, the issue of ethics was brought to the fore by Christiane Nord. Nord added the concept of translator loyalty to *skopos* theory in order to ethically situate the translator, who otherwise makes translation decisions based exclusively on the translation's purpose or *skopos* as laid out in the translation instructions (or translation brief).

Generally, the translation *skopos* and the translation brief are negotiated with the translator by the client, the agency or agencies that are initiating the translation. Nord asserts the ethical constraint of loyalty supersedes the *skopos* or purpose of the translation and the translation instructions. Nord describes her approach as "function plus loyalty."

> Function refers to the factors that make a target text work in the intended way in target situation. Loyalty refers to the interpersonal relationship between the translator, the source-text sender, the target text addressees, and the initiator.[7]

For Nord, loyalty is an interpersonal category between four individuals or groups of people, unlike the concept of translator fidelity which describes the translator's relationship to the source and target texts, or between the texts

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Translation Workshop, Iguassu Falls, Brazil, 15-27 June 2003); Ernst R. Wendland, *Translating the Literature of Scripture*, PTT 1 (Dallas: SIL International; distr. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004); Lynell Zogbo, "Introduction: The Field Today," in *A History of Bible Translation*, ed. Philip A. Noss (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letturatura, 2007), 337-50; Nathan Esala, "Skopostheorie: A Functional Approach for the Future of Bible Translation in Africa?" *JACT* 15 (2012): 26-32.

[5]   Nord, *Translating*, 1.

[6]   Katharina Reiss and Hans J. Vermeer, *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained*, trans. Christiane Nord and Marina Dudenhöfer (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 2013), 90.

[7]   Nord, *Translating*, 126.

themselves.[8] The foregrounding of human relationships in translator loyalty helps open up some theoretical space to observe and value local African agency in Bible translation processes.[9] However, complex and inequitable power relationships between translation participants in a post-colonial environment like Ghana, Africa, which is the main locale in focus for this study, makes it difficult to practice equitable loyalty in translation projects.[10]

2   The Social Commitments of Contextual Bible Study

The contention of this article is that the social commitments, methodologies, and transformational experiences of Contextual Bible Study (CBS), as applied to Bible translation, help to overcome some of the challenges regarding agency and loyalty in functionalist translation.

The CBS social commitments will help to specify the position of the translator and the initiators in terms of their relationship to the host[11] community and to source text scholarship (see Sections 0, 0 and E). There are six CBS commitments, namely:[12]

(i)   A commitment to read the Bible in community from the perspective of the poor and working class as a community starting point, with the goal of creating redemptive communities.

(ii)   A commitment to read the Bible critically using the resources of poor and marginalised communities and that of critical scholarship.

(iii)   A commitment to read the Bible collaboratively between the following social groups: poor and working class groups, organic intellectuals, and socially-engaged scholars and theologians.

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[8]   Nord, *Translating*, 125.

[9]   Nathan Esala, "Skopostheorie," 31.

[10]   Nathan Esala, "Measuring the Adequacy of the Host Text Using Skopostheorie in Bible Translation: The Ethics of Operational Transparency," *BT* 65 (2014): 308-36, 323.

[11]   Nord uses "receptor community" and "target text." Following James A. Maxey, I prefer to use the word "host" over terms like "target" or "receptor." This places translation within the conceptual field of hospitality, rather than using terms governed by the "code model" of communication. James A. Maxey, "Hostile Hosts and Unruly Guests: Bible Translation as Hospitality and Counterinsurgency" (paper presented at Bible Translation 2013, October 11-15, Dallas Texas, 2013), https://map .bloomfire.com/posts/692586-hostile-hosts-and-unruly-guests-bible-translation-as-hospitality-and-counterins.

[12]   Gerald O. West, "Reading the Bible with the Marginalised: The Value/s of Contextual Bible Reading," *StThJ* 1 (2015): 235-61, doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.17570 /STJ.2015.V1N2.A11.

(iv)   A commitment to read the Bible for individual and social transformation.

(v)   A commitment to the analysis of layers of context in self, society and biblical texts, including economic, political, cultural, and religious layers of context.

(vi)   A commitment to read the Bible foregrounding issues of contestation of the God of life against the idols of death.

How do the social commitments and the interpretative strategies associated with CBS help configure translator loyalty in relationship to specific groups of people in the host audience? How might they sharpen what is technically possible within the s*kopos* theory framework to make it socially beneficial for the host audience? While many things are possible, not everything is beneficial!

B   THE PRIORITY OF THE HOST COMMUNITY

Skopos theory recognises the priority of the audience and host context in terms of how a translation functions.[13] The main focus of loyalty is on the relationship between the translator and the audience in the translation processes. A translator needs to be loyal to real people in the audience. Nord recognises how difficult it is for a translator to find out what actual people in the host audience desire.[14] This difficulty is compounded by the cross-cultural and asymmetrical power relations in post-colonial contexts.[15] When translation clients or initiators represent outside entities such as in Bible translation, local people often tell the representatives of the translation organisation what they think the organisation wants or expects to hear. Even when translators are part of the host audience, in their translation "role" or vocation, they are often perceived as acting on behalf of the client. This is especially the case when participants are negotiating layers of complex power relations.

1   Translational Dialogue as "Public Transcript"

The theoretical underpinnings of CBS include the work of James C. Scott.[16] Scott's work is significant for a discussion on agency in interpretation and translation. Scott recognises that in situations where one group is dominant and

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[13]   Nord, *Translating*, 28-29.
[15]   Nord, *Translating*, 125. Christiane Nord, "Quo Vadis, Functional Translatology?" *Target* 24 (2012): 31.
[15]   Esala, "Skopostheorie," 26. Esala, "Measuring," 323-324.
[16]   James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

the other is subordinate, the typical interaction between the two groups is slanted in favour of the dominant group. Scott calls this the public transcript.

> The public transcript is a shorthand way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate…The public transcript where it is not positively misleading, is unlikely to tell the whole story about power relations. It is frequently in the interest of both parties to tacitly conspire in misrepresentation.… The theatrical imperatives that normally prevail in situations of domination produce a public transcript in close conformity with how the dominant group would wish to have things appear.[17]

When dialoguing about audience expectations for a translation, Scott's research on the public transcript suggests translators should expect that local communities will share what they think translators and the translation agencies they represent want to hear.

2   Moving Beyond the Public Transcript through CBS

How does one move beyond the public transcript which favours the dominant in the room, whether that be around a table of translation initiators, or translators in their own communities of embedded relations?

CBS addresses this in at least three ways. First, CBS looks at the audience in a layered way.[18] Each community is composed of many sub communities who are marginalised to varying degrees in the "public space" of contemporary decision making, political representation and policy making. Second, Bible study facilitators delve deeper into the specificity of a given community, with an intention of prioritising suffering, victimisation and marginalisation throughout the layered community's experiences. Third, because of the pain a marginalised group experiences, it is normal for that group to practice a private form of discourse which Scott calls "the hidden transcript."

> I shall use the term hidden transcript to characterize discourse that takes place "offstage" beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript.[19]

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[17]   Scott, *Domination*, 2, 4.
[18]   A community is not simply homogenous, but rather composed of different levels of interwoven power relations, including the influence of various social locations, economics, politics, culture, and religion.
[19]   Scott, *Domination*, 4-5.

CBS recognises that marginalised groups have safe spaces where they can take off their masks and express their hidden views and thoughts. CBS seeks to secure the Bible study environment as an additional safe space for marginalised groups.[20] Safe space thus helps foster the expression of agency.

3   Securing Safe Space through CBS to Encourage Genuine Dialogue

A major part of making the Bible study space safe is crystallised in the simple statement that CBS participants intentionally and methodologically read the Bible "on the side" of the subordinate group. Methodologically CBS seeks to validate the priority of the hidden transcript over the public transcript.

In a recent study around Job 2-3 done with a group of people living with disabilities among the Bikɔɔm people of Ghana, Bikɔɔm Bible translator and CBS facilitator, James Adongo, unequivocally signaled that this Bible study was intended to be "on the side of the participants" by opening the study time with a traditional folktale.[21] In Scott's taxonomy, folktales are an example of "infrapolitical" discourse, along with jokes, rumors, gossip, songs, euphemisms, codes, and rituals. Infrapolitical speech is a third type of speech which mediates between the public and hidden transcripts. It is a coded kind of speech that takes place in the public view, but it is intentionally employed to have a double meaning. The primary meaning is critical of the dominant group, but only if you can decode the inferences. The other meaning, for those who do not know the code, is innocuous or simply a story.[22]

Adongo told a folktale about a farmer who hated his horse because he could not do any useful work. One day when the horse was walking along, he fell into a well. Seeing the horse, the farmer called his family and friends around. He said, "Let's bury this horse quickly." So they started burying the horse, but when the dirt hit the horse, the horse shook himself and the dirt fell to his hooves. When the dirt accumulated a bit, the horse simply raised his hooves and eventually, he was able to climb out of the well. At the end of the story Adongo openly spoke of themes of the hidden transcript when he urged participants that in this study we want you to "shake yourselves so that people do not bury you!"

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[20]   Gerald O. West, "The Not So Silent Citizen: Hearing Embodied Theology in The Context of HIV and AIDS in South Africa," in *Heterotopic Citizen: New Research on Religious Work for the Disadvantaged*, ed. Trygve Wyller (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 37-38. CBS may take place in an already secure space, or a socially engaged scholar may help secure a previously unsafe site.

[21]   For the full translation of the folktale see Nathan Esala, "Towards Contextualizing 'Contextual Bible Study' among the Bikɔɔm Peoples and Their Neighbors in Ghana," *JTSA* 154 (2016): 126.

[22]   Scott, *Domination*, 19.

There are many group facilitation skills that take place throughout the implementation of a study which should signal to participants that this space and time are intended to be secure safe spaces.[23] Each of their voices and experiences are important and valued. Safe spaces furnish subordinate or subaltern populations the opportunity to practice or share their hidden transcripts in a more open and reciprocal fashion even in the presence of those who are from dominant groups if they trust those present are "on their side."

4   Distinguishing the Facilitators from the Audience

CBS seeks to distinguish the facilitator's role from that of the audience. The reason for this is to help prevent the facilitator from reading his or her interests into the marginalised community. The social commitments mentioned above, the strategies for securing safe space, and the focus on locally defined praxis are intended to mitigate against a facilitator coopting the voices of a marginalised group. Distinguishing interests of translators and audiences would be helpful for translators who find themselves managing multiple interests (see Section 0).

5   Addressing Layers of Context by Privileging Experiences of Marginalisation within an Audience

A marginalised community's experience is privileged in CBS. Strengthening and listening to their hidden transcript is the key starting point for engaging the broader community.

For the disabilities group in Ghana, mentioned above, coming together for the purpose of affirming their human value gave them an opportunity to practice their hidden transcript of human dignity and connected them with people with whom they could practice their transcripts in the future. An example of how this group began to express aspects of their hidden transcript study occurred towards the end of the study when different groups created their own versions of Job 3, their own laments (see Appendix 1 for the elderly women's group's appropriation of Job 3).

The lament of the elderly women emotionally moved the facilitators who were present and thus the hidden transcript began to engage other layers of context. One of the facilitators said, "We said laments expressed issues of tears, and when one hears this lament, you can see that is really a crying matter" (author's translation). He said this with a smile, but the underlying emotion was clear. Studying the Bible with people living with disabilities turned the hearts of the Bible study facilitators'—who are also Bible translators—from ignoring

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[23]   Gerald O. West. *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible*. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 110-127.

marginalised voices in their midst towards actively interpreting the Bible with them. Together, those living with disabilities and the facilitators/translators pursued interpretations and actions that bestow life rather than death.[24]

As further evidence for the claim that the Bible study was life giving for the facilitators, several months after the Job study, a Bikɔɔm facilitator gave unsolicited feedback to a friend of the author. Reportedly, the facilitator said in a very serious tone, "I did not know our people felt that way, that they would consider taking their own lives." Through the CBS process, it appears his heart was being turned to "the least of these" among his brothers and sisters (Matthew 25:40). The same is true for the author. As a North American Bible translator, who studied a biblical text with Bikɔɔm translators for the purpose of helping those translators translate that text for the Bikɔɔm community, the author did not actively consider how the Bible was being received by those considered to be the least among the Bikɔɔm people because he was having a hard time engaging more dominant voices. Unexpectedly by privileging marginalisation as a window into studying the book of Job, the CBS process appears to be forging a more reciprocal dialogue between local facilitators, a North American translator/scholar, and the whole host audience. The CBS process helps position scholars and facilitators on the side of the host audience's pain as well as its pride.

Through CBS, facilitators engage with marginalised groups around issues that bring life and death to them. Highlighting the gravity of the issues for these differently abled bodies and privileging their experience in the context of God, family, and community opens up dialogue in life-giving ways. Highlighting the experience of human bodies, grants them epistemological privilege within the broader community. This is a significant shift from the usual method of biblical interpretation in translation.

The conclusion of the essay will suggest how this kind of epistemological privileging of marginalised groups within a community could be applied to translation.[25]

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[24] Gerald O. West, "Articulating, Owning, and Mainstreaming Local Theologies: The Contribution of Contextual Bible Study," *JTSA* 122 (2005): 23-35.

[25] While it is beyond the scope of this article to argue in depth where such a privileging is also evident in the literature of the Bible itself, David Pleins has attempted to highlight the diversity of approaches to social ethics in the HB. Cf. J. David Pleins, *The Social Visions of the Hebrew Bible: A Theological Introduction*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2000). With Pleins, the Psalms offer a resource for privileging social pain (see Ps 56:8-9). In the NT, some passages in the Corinthian letters highlight a theology of the body and weakness, which may be akin to prioritising their experience of pain in the interpretative process (1 Cor 11:26-29, 12:21-26, 2 Cor 12:9-10).

C   THE PROCESS AND HERMENEUTICAL MOVEMENTS OF CBS

CBS audiences do not engage the Biblical text in an unmediated fashion. The marginalised audience is offered a set of questions that help them construct "lines of connection"[26] between their context, the source text, and the ancient context which created the source text.

Forming a CBS set of study questions begins by critically analysing local experiences by using both local and scholarly resources, focusing on the systemic dimensions of the group's experience. The group will select a social problem which will serve as the "theme" for the study. Then it involves facilitators and group participants collaboratively selecting a particular Bible text which promises to shed light on their experience. Participants may have a desire to study a particular text. After selecting a text, facilitators engage critical biblical scholarship looking for "lines of connection" in the text and context of the Bible. Facilitators create a set of questions that help participants read their situation and the biblical text in pursuit of transformation. CBS questions seek to move participants through a process of liberation hermeneutics, made popular in Latin America, called See-Judge-Act. The See-Judge-Act movement "begins with social analysis of a context of struggle (See) and then moves into a similar systemic analysis of the Bible which brings texts and contexts into dialogue (Judge), and then moves into community controlled action (Act)."[27] Within CBS the See-Judge-Act movement is supported by two sub-movements.

The first sub-movement begins with community consciousness, which is the participants' current reality, moving into critical consciousness, where participants slow down and carefully read the Bible using the resources of critical biblical scholarship. Facilitators lead participants through a set of questions which move through a range of approaches within biblical studies: thematic, literary, and socio-historic. Then participants move back into community consciousness, where they appropriate what they learned and decide upon appropriate action.

The second sub-movement describes how the study process moves through the different critical lenses of biblical scholarship. Corresponding to the community consciousness stage, the study begins "in front of the text," as participants consider their contextual problem's thematic relation to the biblical text. Then as the study moves into the critical consciousness stage, participants

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[26] Norman K. Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible: A Socio-Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 225.

[27] Gerald O. West, "Liberation Hermeneutics," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 513.

are invited to engage the text through a literary lens. The literary lens provides an egalitarian starting point because participants do not need background information to engage in study "on the text." Then the study may ask socio-historic questions, about the world "behind the text," the world which produced the biblical text. The literary and socio-historic questions help participants consider "lines of connection" between their experiences and the biblical communities' experiences. At the end of the study, in the community consciousness stage, participants move back "in front of the text," as they appropriate their new perspective on the biblical text for application to their social problem. So CBS begins and ends with the community, and in between it helps participants carefully and slowly interpret the detail of a biblical text.[28]

Having established how CBS positions a facilitator's relationship to the host audience, and having briefly described the movements in CBS from audience to text and then back to audience, we will now look at the translator's loyal relationship to the author or source text beginning in *skopos* theory and then considering how that relationship is configured in the CBS model.

D   THE TRANSLATOR'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE SOURCE TEXT

At a time when fidelity to the source text was the focus in translation, *skopos* theory sought to dethrone the absolute rule of the source text in translation evaluation.[29] But *skopos* theory does not dismiss the translator's ethical relationship to the author or the source text.

1   Loyal Human Relationships with an Ancient Source text in Skopos Theory

Nord's notion of translator loyalty specifies human relationships over textual relationships. In the absence of a live human author, as in the case of ancient texts like the Bible, Nord suggests that a translator, as one possible interpreter, makes interpretative decisions based on loyalty to the best scholarly research and in view of the *skopos* or purpose of the translation as predetermined by the translation client or joint initiators. Along the same lines as Nord in translation studies, but following Justin Ukpong in biblical studies, one can argue that the translation brief should specify the translation's interpretative methodologies based on the prevailing worldview of the audience, such as the religio-cultural interpretation of the Bible.[30]

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[28]   Gerald O. West, "Contextual Bible Reading: A South African Case Study," *AnaBrux* 11 (2006): 142-43.

[29]   Nord, *Translating*, 25.

[30]   Justin S. Ukpong, "Reading the Bible in a Global Village: Issues and Challenges from African Readings," in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Cape Town,*

2   CBS and Biblical Source Text

CBS changes the dialogue about loyalty to the source text, to consider which scholarly approaches are life-giving[31] for this or that group. Through the CBS questions and subsequent dialogue, CBS facilitators offer perspectives from a range of biblical disciplines (thematic, literary, and socio-historical) that have the potential to bring life. However, the facilitator is often not aware of what is useful and what is not useful for a particular context. So the facilitator makes an offer of information which may or may not be picked up by the community. The notion of making an offer of information is also used in *skopos* theory.[32]

Interestingly, the same text which can be read one way to liberate one group may be read differently to liberate a different group within the same broader community. Gerald West illustrates this in his discussion about the evolution of the Tamar CBS, which studied the rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13) with many women all over South Africa who have experienced gender based violence. Later, at the request of some of the women who experienced the liberation of the Tamar study, the CBS facilitators reread the same text with "their men" who were experiencing marginalisation in society. Due to the different perspectives of the groups and their differing paths to liberation, the groups had a different interpretation of the word "love" in 2 Sam 13:1. The women could not imagine that Amnon really loved Tamar, his half-sister. But the men considered the possibility that this was real love. Their differing perspectives caused them to see the structure of the plot differently.[33] These two differently marginalised groups illustrate how the text's capacity to liberate is in relationship to the reader's perspective and experiences of marginalisation. Furthermore, one marginalised group's liberation does not preclude another group from experiencing a different but related liberation.

CBS could provide a place for facilitators to test interpretations which may be useful for translation. CBS challenges translators to discover interpretations that bring life to their communities' experience of pain, and then to find ways to leave translated signs that point to those interpretations if it can

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GPBS 3 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 915-16; Esala, "Skopostheorie," 29.

[31] The term life-giving connotes cognitive, emotional, and visceral experiences. Theologically, from a Christian perspective, life-giving hermeneutical approaches draw inspiration from John 10:10.

[32] Nord, *Translating*, 25-26.

[33] Gerald O. West, "Deploying the Literary Detail of a Biblical Text (2 Samuel 13:1-22) in Search of Redemptive Masculinities," in *Interested Readers: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honor of David J. A. Clines*, ed. James K. Aitken, Jeremy M. S. Clines, and Christl M. Maier (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 308-311.

be done in a way that is defensible in relation to source text scholarship. Furthermore, as the Tamar study indicated, CBS pushes translation to try to remain open to different interpretative directions because different groups read detail in the text differently based on their Spirit-directed need for liberation.

On the other hand, while CBS intentionally seeks interpretations that liberate, translators need to be careful not to fall into a fundamentalism on the right or left by being overly enthusiastic about justifying domination or overly enthusiastic about liberation in the text, glossing over trajectories of domination in the interpretative tradition. Recognising these two trajectories in biblical texts, to embrace and to distinguish, can help translators alert their readers to passages and interpretations that tend to exclude or marginalise neighbours and those that bring life and hospitality to them.[34] For an example of a translated text see Appendix 3.

E   THE TRANSLATOR'S RELATION TO THE CLIENT AND TO ETHICS

Beyond the bilateral relationship of the translator to the host audience, and source scholarship, Nord mentions a third entity in the translator's realm of loyal relationships, the initiator or the client which sponsors a translation. For Bible translation, these could be translation agencies, churches, or local organisations. A client wants a translator to make a translation for some vested interest. Recognising this real world influence on translation helps agencies and translators to be more explicit and realistic about what they are trying to do. What modes of production are they participating in and why? *Skopos* theory has given Bible translation the concept of the translation brief which publicly states how an initiator (or set of initiators) is intending to act in this translation. Ideally a brief makes explicit the ideo-theological interests[35] that initiators and translators are presupposing and using as they translate this text seeking to effect change in this particular audience.

1   CBS and Translator–Client Relationships

Applying the commitments of CBS to translation clients challenges translation agencies to explicitly situate themselves in the translation brief by standing in solidarity with a multiplicity of marginalisations in the host community in any given translational action. It would be fruitful for translation agencies at

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[34]   Walter Brueggemann, *Old Testament Theology: Essays on Structure, Theme, and Text* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 4; 16-18; 42-43.

[35]   Jonathan A. Draper, "Reading the Bible as Conversation: A Theory and Methodology for Contextual Interpretation of the Bible in Africa," *G&T* 19/2 (2002): 18-19. Gerald O. West, "Interpreting 'the Exile' in African Biblical Scholarship: An Ideo-Theological Dilemma in Post-Colonial South Africa," in *Exile and Suffering*, ed. Bob Becking and Dirk Human, OtSt (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 256-258.

international, national, and local levels to consider adopting or adapting the commitments of CBS. The commitments would certainly affect the translation brief and thereby would influence how initiators and translators work together to produce the host text to function in the host context.

2   Skopos Theory, CBS, and Translator Ethics

The fourth participant in translation is the translator himself or herself. While a translator can always claim, "This is my job, I am only doing what I am hired to do by a client," Nord encourages translators to evaluate the ethics of any translational action before translating.

As mentioned above, applying CBS to translation would encourage translators to recognise their social location in relation to marginalised groups in the audience. The social commitments, the privileging of the perspectives of marginalised groups, and the emphasis on local praxis help translators stand in solidarity with marginalised groups in the host communities without coopting their perspectives. Moreover, the study process offers translators an experience where they can hear fragments of the hidden transcript of marginalised groups in the context of liberating praxis. Such experiences promise to turn the hearts of translators to "the least of these" in their midst.

In Christian theological language, CBS experiences give initiators and translators the chance to experience what it is like to stand cruciformly with the marginalised, far away and in their own backyards.[36] Using such Christian language to describe CBS does not imply an attempt to convert Muslims or Traditionalists. In Ghana, Muslims, Christians and Traditionalists alike enjoyed exploring the liberative potential of Job 2-3 in a dialog of mutual respect for each other. [37]

F   AN APPLICATION TO TRANSLATION

CBS is interested in producing community appropriations of texts based on community Bible study experiences. After studying Job 2-3 with the disabilities group (see Appendix 1), the author proceeded to study the same text with an Alzheimer's group (see Appendix 2) and a low income elderly group in the United States. Each group created their own appropriations of Job 3. Are these activities of community Bible appropriations useful for Bible translation?

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[36] Leopoldo A. Sánchez M., "Can Anything Good Come Out of _____? Come and See! Faithful Witness in Marginality and Hospitality," *ConJ* 41 (Spring 2015): 122.
[37] CBS could be useful in exploring Christian, Muslim and Traditionalist perspectives in a theological dialogue on marginalisation.

Recognising that translation makes a new offer of information,[38] and that translation does change everything,[39] and that there are contexts where new translation is desired by communities, how do the social commitments of CBS as interpreted in the context of functional translation make a difference in actual translation decisions?

In order to address that question, transformed by three Contextual Bible Studies of Job 3 with three different groups struggling with social and theological marginalisation, the author created an experimental written translation of Job 3 in English, which seeks to be useful for global English-speaking communities perpetuating and struggling with stigma because of physical and mental conditions. The translation seeks to evoke lines of connection with the past, highlighting structural sin, and paths to liberation. It attempts to indicate how the text might be used to marginalise certain groups of people in the broader audience. The translation uses a literary style to encourage engagement with the detail of the text.[40] Footnotes indicate where the translator sees lines of connection in the source text with liberating or dominating forces in the host context. The translation footnotes indicate whether the line of connection came from a branch of critical scholarship or from the insights of a particular marginalised community (see Appendix 3 footnotes).

In communities that have long standing translations which are greatly respected by the society, a new translation is likely to struggle for acceptance. In that case it would be good to use the existing translation and simply footnote the "lines of connection" discovered in CBS in the fashion described above. In communities that do not have a long standing translation in their tradition, such as among the Bikɔɔm people, it was useful to see how CBS experiences and commitments to scholarly resources influenced new translation choices. The experiences of CBS which brought the translator into contact with people in despair because of their life situations helped the translator connect with the rhetoric of Job 3 on an emotional level. Poetry is often associated with deep emotion. This translator judges the CBS experiences made a difference in the emotional quality of his choice of language. At the very least, one can see

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[38]   Nord, *Translating*, 25-26.

[39]   Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2013), http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID =10640475.

[40]   Wendland, *Translating the Literature,* 50-53. The flexibility of the functional school of translation is that a translation brief can call for any style of translation that fits the translation's overall purpose, including a literary approach. If the purpose includes creating more redemptive communities, CBS argues that a literary style can be used to help further that purpose.

several footnotes that mark points in the translation where the translator was influenced by CBS experiences (see translation footnotes c, d, k, l, and m).

The commitments of CBS orient the translator to privilege the epistemological realities of the host audience in the translation. This commitment made it easier to see lines of connection between the Bikɔɔm traditional worldview and similar worldviews discussed in scholarship of the ANE. The impact of this commitment can be seen in translation choices (see translation footnotes b, f, and h). CBS also reorients the translator's commitment to Biblical scholars who come from social locations in African communities, scholars who use African Biblical Hermeneutics in their academic writings. The work of Masenya Madipoane also influenced the translation choices (see translation footnotes a, g, j, and n).

G   CONCLUSION

The results of applying the commitments and processes of CBS to functional translation are preliminary. This article argues that CBS reorients the application of interpersonal loyalty in functional translation to marginalised groups in the host community and to source text scholars who privilege African contexts, including marginalised perspectives within African contexts, in their study of the ancient text and world. Such reorientation is theoretically important. CBS also challenges the initiators of a translation to reorient their own loyalty in relation to marginalised groups in the host audience.

From the point of view of a translator, it is clear to this author, that it is beneficial for translators to engage with marginalised groups as they express their appropriations of biblical texts for the purpose of liberation (see Appendix 1 and 2). This is analogous to creative writing which helps translators connect experientially and emotionally with the rhetoric and poetics of contemporary communities who share lines of connection with ancient faith communities and the biblical rhetoric and poetry. Moreover, the epistemological orientation of privileging marginalised perspectives within African worldviews, as demonstrated by scholars of African Biblical Hermeneutics, provides useful intellectual resources to the translator as the translator forges lines of connection between contemporary and ancient worlds in their choice of words and phrases and in their use of study footnotes.

In translation intended for publication outside of an academic journal, more work needs to be done to test whether such translation decisions and footnotes would be acceptable to different sectors of an audience. How would such translations gain acceptance in churches, communities and publishing houses? Since translation is built on negotiating trust and recognition of mutual

benefit across cultural and ideological interests,[41] it follows that translators, communities, churches, and publishers would be most favourable to such translation approaches if they experience the kind of transformation CBS offers. In northern Ghana the Bikɔɔm translation team would do well to offer CBS experiences to the broader community to try and foster the trust and recognition of mutual benefit needed for communities to produce and use translations that privilege marginalised perspectives in sacred text interpretation and translation.

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APPENDIX 1

An elderly group of women living with disabilities' lament inspired by Job 3 (translation by James Adongo)

> The suffering we are undergoing should not get to any other one,
> but we alone,
> so that when we die,
> other healthy people can bury us well.
> We don't attribute our case to anyone but God.
> And he knows why.

APPENDIX 2

A family living with Alzheimer's lament inspired by Job 3:

At Grandma's death, she smiled and died.
    A good way to go.
        A happiness and relief at death.
        The pain is in the DNA and goes back far.
    I won't do anything about it, but it sucks.
Death is rest,
    peace and hidden treasure.
        Ethan[42] and Mom found the hidden treasure.
        My brother was my very best friend.
    I'll look him up in heaven.
He was just "something else."
I remember Grandpa's scream at Adam's death.
    Why in one family?
        I don't know.
I am okay with what is going on.
    I get upset but not very often.
        Waiting for him to take me home.
        I don't know what God thinks of me when I get upset.
    It sucks, but it is what it is.
I am just here, not doing much.
I'd rather be home.

APPENDIX 3

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[42] Names have been changed.

A translation of Job 3

Skopos: Create a new literary translation of Job 3 useful to English speaking communities experiencing and perpetuating social and theological stigma because of their bodily and social conditions.

Audience: Bible translation practitioners and translation theorists.

Research Question: How can a series of CBS experiences influence mainstream translation?

[1] After this Job opened his mouth and cursed[a] his day.[b] [2] Job answered and said:
 [3] Delete the day on which I was born,
  and also the night which announced a man has been conceived!

 [4] That day! Let it be darkness[d]
  Do not call for it[e], God above!
  Do not shine light upon it
 [5] Darkness and deep shadow- redeem it for your own
  Let a cloud settle on it
  Let the day darkening evil eclipse[f] terrify it!

 [6] That night! Let gloom seize it–
  Not to be counted among the days of the year
  In the number of months, not to enter
[7] Behold that night! Let it be barren[g]
  Let no ululation of joy[h] penetrate[i] it
   [8] Let those who curse a day–curse it!
    The ones who are ready to rouse Leviathan
   [9] Let its morning stars be dark
  Let it wait for the daylight and receive none
Do not let it look on the eyelids of dawn
   [10] because it did not shut the doors of my womb[j]
   nor did it hide trouble from my eyes

 [11] Why did I not come out of the womb stillborn?
  Or from the belly, come out and expire?
[12] Why were there knees to receive me,
  and breasts for me to suck?
   [13] For now I would be lying down at peace asleep
    then I would be at rest[k]
   [15] or with princes and their gold
  who filled their houses with silver
[16] or why was I not covered up like a miscarriage
  like babies who have never seen light[l]

[17] There the wicked cease from insurrection
  and there the exhausted are at rest
   [18] Together, prisoners can relax
   they do not hear the voice of the oppressor

[19] Small and great are the same
there the slave is free from his master

[20] Why does he give light to a sufferer
   and life to the bitter in soul
      [21] To those who long for death, and it does not come
         they dig for it more than hidden treasure[m]
            [22] Merrily, they rejoice even to jubilation
         because they find the grave
      [23] to a man[n] whose path is hidden
whom God has hedged in?

[24] For my sighing comes as my daily bread
   and my groanings pour out like water
      [25] Because I feared a fear and it happened to me
         and what I dreaded came to me

[26] I am not at peace
   not still
      not at rest
         and trouble has come.

[a]**3.1** Many African communities struggle with the idea that Job cursed the day of his birth. Masenya points out that the narrator tells us Job cursed his day, however, the character of Job calls others to curse the day in v. 8.[43]

[b]**3.1** In southern Ghana, people could take this as referring to the day of the week on which one was born.

[c]**3.3** Job challenges a theology which seeks to locate the cause of all misfortune in the moral failures of an individual or a relative, or blame misfortune on an individual's lack of faith.

[d]**3.4** An family member in the Alzheimer's study observed this is Gen 1:1 in reverse.

[e]**3.4** Require it, seek it

[f]**3.5** In the ANE in may be that this phrase referred to mystical evil powers, such as dragons, which capture the sun and moon.

[g]**3.7** Job now moves dangerously close to cursing his own mother's womb,

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[43]   Madipoane Masenya, "Her Appropriation of Job's Lament? Her-Lament of Job 3, From an African Story-Telling Perspective," in *Postcolonial Perspectives in African Biblical Interpretations*, ed. Musa W. Dube Shomanah, Andrew Mũtũa Mbuvi and Dora R. Mbuwayesango, GPBS 13 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 283-97.

since the night also refers to his conception in v. 3.[44]

[h]**3.7** In many African cultures ululation refers to a shrill celebratory sound normally made by women at the birth of a child.

[i]**3.7** Job is using language of birth, but it also has sexual overtones.

[j]**3.10** Job laments the night of his conception, wishing his mother's womb would have spontaneously aborted him. Is he also blaming his calamity on his mother? What about his father? What would have been the result for his parents if Job had died at birth or been a miscarriage?[45]

[k]**3.13** Death is rest, comfort, a friend.

[l]**3.16** A family member in the Alzheimer's group observed that ironically wishing your life never happened is a lot like losing your memories of it happening which is also pretty terrible. The disabilities group indicated that the concern for a good burial is something Job takes for granted but cannot be assumed by them. See Appendix 1.

[m]**3.21** The disabilities group and the Alzheimer's patients underscored that this section focusing on death is very important to suffering people.

[n]**3.23** Job refers to himself as a man, just as in v. 3. His social location as a powerful man who has lost everything is a big reason why this story made it into the Bible. See Masenya, "Her Lament."

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[44]   See Masenya, "Her-Lament."
[45]   See Masenya, "Her Lament."