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The Bible as “Men’s” Word? Feminism and the Translation of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

Zusammenfassung:

Der Artikel beschreibt die in den letzten Jahrzehnten stattfindenden Diskussionen über inklusive Bibelübersetzungen, die im englischsprachigen Raum zuweilen auch als „geschlechterneutrale“ Übersetzungen bezeichnet werden. Die Analyse zeigt, dass diesen Debatten hermeneutische und sozial-politische Differenzen zu Grunde liegen. Es treffen dabei wörtlich-linguistische auf sozial-kulturelle Übersetzungsprinzipien, was dazu führt, dass etablierte Machtverhältnisse sowohl in den Bibelwissenschaften als auch in christlichen und jüdischen Institutionen hinterfragt werden. Nur so ist die Heftigkeit und Schärfe der Debatte zu erklären, da einfach mehr auf dem Spiel steht als nur der Text an sich. Der Artikel untersucht die Kontroversen in drei Schritten. Zunächst weist eine zusammenfassende Darstellung der neueren wissenschaftlichen Entwicklungen in den Übersetzungswissenschaften darauf hin, dass die Übersetzungswissenschaften die wörtlich-linguistischen Übersetzungsstrategien weit hinter sich gelassen haben. Dann beschreibt der Artikel mit einem Fokus auf dem englisch- und deutschsprachigen Raum die verschiedenen inklusiven Bibelübersetzungen. Schließlich illustriert der Artikel die Kontroverse am Beispiel von Hosea 11,9c.

1. Controversies over Inclusive Bible Translations: Introductory Comments

Translating the Bible is old business, but recently it has created new theological, ecclesiastical, and socio-political controversies. With the publication of inclusive-language Bibles, called “gender neutral” by Christian Right scholars, new controversies have surfaced, particularly in the US-American and German-language contexts since the 1990s. In a narrow sense, inclusive-language Bibles reevaluate the appropriateness of masculine-

dominated vocabulary, grammar, and thoughts. Then their focus is on gender only. Yet in a broader sense inclusive-language Bibles also promote sensitivity that goes beyond gender. Embracing egalitarian and non-hierarchical concepts, they reframe any language patterns grounded in structures of oppression, such as racism, class oppression, assumptions about physical abilities, or nationalism. Inclusive Bible translators have thus put their metaphorical finger into the very wound of theo-ecclesiastical struggles over authority and dogma that have raged since the Civil Rights Era over who is in and who is out in terms of religious practices and theories.

Because of the religious-cultural and socio-political struggles during the past forty years, progressive Bible translators sensed a need to create translations based on these changes. Once they did, religiously and socio-culturally conservative power brokers engaged the theo-ecclesiastical and socio-political claims made by progressive theologians, Bible scholars, and clergy since the 1960s. Predictably, these debates have led to considerable controversies, although inclusive Bible translations align with recent developments in the academic field of translation studies. There, too, the literalist-linguistic translation model has given way to a paradigm that regards translations as products of geo-political, social, cultural, and economic dynamics. Contemporary translation theorists maintain that for various reasons “contexts” shape translations more than a source text, which replaced the plausibility for word-for-word translations and moved toward viewing translations as socio-cultural products that function within historically grown networks of power, as translation theorist Lawrence Venuti famously articulated.¹

This article discusses these developments and controversies in several sections. One section, entitled “The Illusion of Biblical Literalism: From Formal and Dynamic or Functional Equivalence to Translation Studies,” describes the developments in translation studies, as they relate to the emergence of inclusive Bible translations, especially concerning the current trend of foreignizing target-language texts, a concept first proposed by Lawrence Venuti, as later explained in the first section. Another section, entitled “Why the Fervor, Antagonism, and Denunciation? The Scandal of Inclusive Bible Translations,” outlines several inclusive Bible translations, all of which use foreignization by inculturating the Bible into inclusive language patterns. This section also describes the public and scholarly reception of the new translations and proposes that theo-political power, institutionalized authority, and religious dogma play a crucial role in this conflict. Yet

another section, entitled “‘For God am I and Not a Male’: The Case of Hos. 11:9c,” illustrates the debate over inclusive translations with a particular Hebrew Bible text. In short, then, the article maps the scholarly controversies that surround inclusive Bible translations in today’s theo-cultural and socio-political struggles over biblical meanings.

2. The Illusion of Biblical Literalism: From Formal and Dynamic or Functional Equivalence to Translation Studies

With the emergence of the empiricist-scientific epistemology in the sixteenth century C.E., western Bible readers learned to reject hermeneutical models advanced by earlier Jewish and Christian interpreters.² The Protestant Reformation, standing in alignment with the newly developing empiricist-scientific epistemology, insisted on *sola scriptura* (only Scripture) as the basis for biblical meaning independent from doctrinal or church-affiliated biblical conventions and restrictions. By reading the Bible directly and without interference from church authorities or theological dogma, reformers and their descendants limited hermeneutical procedures to the *sensus litteralis*. For sure, the history of the Bible and its translation into Greek, Latin, and vernacular languages is complex and complicated.³ Yet what carries through this history is the Reformation idea that Bible translations are literalist-linguistic achievements that transform the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts into *formal* equivalents in the target languages.

This understanding of translation was modified in the 1960s when Eugene A. Nida proposed a “new concept of translation”⁴ called “dynamic” or “functional equivalence.” Nida asserted that “a translation should be the closest natural equivalent of the message in the source language. This means that it cannot be a word-for-word rendering of the original, because this would result in serious distortion of the message. On the other hand, it also means that a translation cannot contain such linguistic and cultural transpositions as would skew the historical setting of the communication. Therefore, the legitimate area of translational equivalence must lie somewhere between these two extremes.”⁵ Central to Nida’s translation theory was the notion of finding the *dynamic* or *functional* equivalent in the target language. The replication of stylistic characteristics (e.g. rhymes, chiasms, or parallelisms) was secondary. The translation had to be in tune with the sensibilities of readers, their word choices, and their contexts. According to Nida, a translation was not “legitimate” if readers misunderstood it, even when the translation “correctly” represented the source text’s formal expressions.⁶

In the 1980s, the field of translation studies moved beyond Nida’s theory when Hans J. Vermeer developed the *Skopos* theory. This theory stressed that the *purpose* of a translation determines what translation strategy should be employed. Hence, translations only succeeded if they reached their functional goals in the target language and not if they merely produced equivalents of the source text.⁷ Other developments, too, moved translation theory from the literalist-linguistic model to approaches that viewed translations as participating within systemic processes. For instance, Itamar Even-Zohar explained: “Translation is no longer a phenomenon whose nature and borders are given once and for all, but an activity dependent on the relations within a certain cultural system.”⁸ In 1990, Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre argued that translation theorists needed to go beyond the literalist-linguistic approach and instead analyze the interactions between translation and culture. They asserted that translations stand in “cultures” shaped by context, history, and conventions.⁹

In the 1990s, one of the most prominent translation theorists, Lawrence Venuti, comprehensively discussed the process involved when a text is translated from one language to another. In this process translators are central though traditionally undervalued, and so Venuti begins his influential book, *The Translator’s Invisibility*, with the following sentence:

‘Invisibility’ is the term I will use to describe the translator’s situation and activity in contemporary Anglo-American culture.... What is remarkable here is that this illusory effect conceals the numerous conditions under which the translation is made, starting with the translator’s crucial intervention in the foreign text.¹⁰

Translators negotiate cultural differences, so their translations are “double writing” and “double reading,”¹¹ interventions into “a present situation” from “a foreign past.”¹² Translators shape the reception of translated texts either by stabilizing the status quo or by resisting homogeneous adaptations.¹³ Since translators stand at the crucial nexus that can prevent “an appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, and political,” Venuti defined “the most urgent question facing the translator...[as], What to do? Why and how do I translate?”¹⁴ Translators have endured an invisible status due to manifold hierarchies and authoritarian dynamics in the publishing industry that reinforced what Venuti called the “domestication of foreign texts.”¹⁵ Foreignization would bring

visibility to translators, who are intermediaries between source text and target language.¹⁶ It would also reduce the commodification of foreign texts because it would make the “cultural other” seem less familiar, less domesticated. Foreignization is a method that makes readers “recognize the linguistic and cultural difference of foreign texts”¹⁷ and receive the translated text as “a disruption of target-language cultural codes.”¹⁸ Hence, Venuti suggested that translation “be studied and practiced as a locus of difference, instead of the homogeneity that widely characterizes it today.”¹⁹

Venuti’s reconceptualization of the translation process and the translator’s role emphasizes the significance of the target language’s context. Translation theorist Michael Cronin agrees with this analysis when he states that translators “are constantly moving backwards and forwards between languages and are therefore sensitive to the liminal, in-between zones that increasingly characterize contemporary consciousness and global cultural evolution.”²⁰ Translators and their translations participate in geo-political, economic, and cultural inequalities that force less powerful participants to submit to hegemonic cultures. If translators do not reflect critically on this process, they advance asymmetric exchanges that turn translations into dominating discourses.²¹ They become agents of empire.

In short, then, translation studies has moved from the literalist-linguistic model to a cultural-studies paradigm that assesses translations as products of geo-political, social, cultural, and economic exchanges that stand within historically grown networks of power.²² This understanding of the translation process as a multifaceted web of power relations also applies to Bible translations, especially when they use inclusive language. Then adherents of literalist-linguistic translation principles encounter socio-cultural ones that seek to confront and disrupt established power arrangements in biblical studies and in Christian and Jewish institutional life. Predictably, this encounter has led to heated, even acerbic exchanges, demonstrating that more is at stake than the text itself. They exemplify that translations are “necessarily embedded within social contexts”²³ and that “the industry-forming power of translation always threatens to embarrass cultural and political institutions because it reveals the shaky foundations of their social authority.”²⁴ The next section focuses on this conflict.

3. Why the Fervor, Antagonism, and Denunciation? The Scandal of Inclusive Bible Translations

The conflict centers on assumptions about the literalist-linguistic and cultural studies paradigms. Inclusive Bible translators insist on the significance of “culture” and context of the target language text, whereas critics emphasize the equivalence of the source text. Consequently, reactions are high-pitched, emotional, and ferocious when feminist translators make gender an issue in the translation of the Bible. Accusations of scholarly incompetence, *ad hominem* attacks, and threats by institutional power brokers target inclusive Bible translators who intentionally move beyond literalist-linguistic and equivalent translation principles. Meanwhile the underlying hermeneutical and sociopolitical differences about translation remain largely unaddressed. Critics, grounded in the literalist-linguistic model, find inclusive Bible translations disloyal to the source text and its authorial setting whereas inclusive Bible translators challenge the nexus of majority power that insists on the literalist-linguistic paradigm. The latter stand in the tradition of minoritized cultures for which “[f]idelity ... means faithfulness to one’s embattled community rather than to any abstract ideal of linguistic equivalence.”²⁵ Inclusive translations are thus alternatives to the hierarchical and androcentric status quo. They foreignize the assumed hierarchies of biblical literature despite some claims that inclusive translations do just the opposite, namely removing the Bible’s foreignness. Yet its adaptation into inclusive language implies a foreignization due to the longstanding hierarchies within which the Bible has been read for centuries. Thus many perceive correctly that inclusive translations threaten structures of authority and power. In short, hermeneutical and sociopolitical differences lie at the heart of the inclusive translation debate although it focuses mostly on minute details of individual verses or particular words. The next two sections describe, first, the emergence of inclusive Bible translations since the nineteenth century and, second, some of the public and scholarly responses to these translations in the past twenty years.

3.a. *The Emergence of Inclusive Bible Translations*

Inclusive Bible translations go back to the nineteenth century C.E. In 1876, Julia E. Smith published a translation of the Bible, entitled *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testament; Translated Literally from the Original Tongues*.²⁶ To some historians, it is the first “feminist” translation because Smith was the first woman to translate the entire

Bible.²⁷ Yet Smith translated the text literally without attention to gender-inclusivity,²⁸ so characterization of her work as feminist is essentializing. Her translation relies on androcentric language, and thus strictly speaking it is not an inclusive translation. Yet Smith’s translation was unusual, as the entire production process involved women: the translator was a woman, the type-setting machine was run by a woman, the proof reader was a woman, and sellers and distributors of the Bible were women,²⁹ certainly an unusual arrangement in the nineteenth century.

A first inclusive Bible translation was completed by Adolph Ernst Knoch in 1930 and known as the *Concordant Version*.³⁰ Knoch understood that the generic term “man” excluded women as well as girls and boys,³¹ and he replaced the noun “man” with “human” when the literary context did not exclusively refer to males.³² Like Smith, Knoch produced a literal translation. For instance, he translated Gen. 1:26: “Make will We humanity in Our image, and according to our likeness, and sway shall they have over the fish of the sea...”³³ Predictably, Knoch’s translation was mainly ignored and sometimes sharply criticized, especially for his decision to use inclusive language. For instance, in 1942, Henry C. Thiessen exclaimed that Knoch’s change from “man” to “human” is “absurd.” Knoch responded with these words:

Women are almost excluded from divine revelation in our popular versions if we hold man to its strict significance. Other languages, even cognate ones like Dutch, have two terms, as in the Greek. If it is absurd to clear up this confusion in our popular versions, then sound sense is insanity.³⁴

Knoch’s insistence on gender-inclusivity is particularly remarkable because he was part of the Christian fundamentalist tradition in the United States, “not known for championing sensitivity to gender codes in the English vernacular of the Bible.”³⁵ Despite his Christian fundamentalist background, then, he was the first Christian Bible translator to deliberately avoid gender-exclusive language.

After Knoch’s work, inclusive translations were not produced again for several decades. Only the Second Feminist Movement of the 1970s brought the issue to the socio-cultural forefront,³⁶ and thereafter several Bible translation committees tried to integrate inclusive language into their translations. It led to the publication of the *New Jerusalem Bible* (NJB) in 1985, the *Revised English Bible* (REB) in 1989, and the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) in 1989. References to inclusive translation principles appear in the prefaces of

these Bible versions. The NRSV committee acknowledged “the danger of linguistic sexism” and the committee’s effort to eliminate “masculine-oriented language ... as far as this can be done without altering passages that reflect the historical situation of ancient patriarchal culture.”³⁷ Similarly, the REB committee explained: “The use of male-oriented language, in passages of traditional versions of the Bible which evidently apply to both genders, has become a sensitive issue in recent years; the revisers have preferred more inclusive gender reference where that has been possible without compromising scholarly integrity or English style.”³⁸ And the NJB stated: “Considerable efforts have also been made, though not at all costs, to soften or avoid the inbuilt preference of the English language, a preference now found so offensive by some people, for the masculine, the word of the Lord concerns women and men equally.”³⁹ These three English translations, then, exhibit some sensitivity toward inclusive gender language, but none of them made inclusive language a priority.⁴⁰ This changed only when five translations, four in English and one in German, were published between 1994 and 2006. All of them use an interpretive strategy that Venuti recommended: the foreignization of the target-language text.

The first of them, *The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation*,⁴¹ has appeared in various editions since 1994 and has been prepared by the “Priests for Equality,” “a movement of women and men throughout the world—laity, religious and clergy—who work for the full participation of women and men in church and society.”⁴² The organization has tried to implement the “words of justice proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council” since 1975⁴³ and might have also benefited from the wider discussions on inclusive language issues in Protestant church life.⁴⁴ The translation began with the New Testament, followed with the Psalms, the Writings, and the Torah, and finally the Prophets. The translators stated that the translation process was “transformational” to them. They explained:

We have been challenged to consider how we think and speak about God and how our concepts influence the way we treat other people. We also have had to consider whether modern renderings of sacred scriptures present modern sexist biases, in addition to biases of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean cultures.⁴⁵

The translators admitted to challenging conventional language about God as “Father” and Jesus as “Lord” and to using alternative terminology such as “Most High” for God or “Teacher” for Jesus. Their translation did not only reject sexist expressions but also avoided

expressions based on class prejudices. For instance, the translation speaks of “the reign of God” instead of God’s “kingdom” to eliminate a socially stratified metaphor. But the translators also worried about their historical obligations and explained that “we seek to recover the expression’s meaning within the context in which it is written without perpetuating the sexism.”⁴⁶

Their radical turn towards inclusive language is perhaps most forcefully articulated in the translation of Gen. 2:7, 21, which they foreignized in the following fashion:

So YHWH fashioned an earth creature out of the clay of the earth, and blew into its nostrils the breath of life. And the earth creature became a living being.... So YHWH made the earth creature fall into a deep sleep, and while it slept, God divided the earth creature in two, then closed up the flesh from its side.

This translation integrated the results of feminist biblical interpretation. Here the first created human is genderless and characterized by its similarity with earth; it is named an “earth creature.” Gone is the idea that the first human is male. The earth creature is genderless until it is divided into two. At this moment the earth creature is “sexualized” and becomes female and male.

A second inclusive translation was published in 1995. Limited to *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, as the title indicates, its goal is comprehensive.⁴⁷ The translators explained that “[t]his version has undertaken the effort to replace or rephrase all gender-specific language not referring to particular historical individuals, all pejorative references to race, color, or religion, and identifications of persons by their physical disability alone, by means of paraphrase, alternative renderings, and other acceptable means of conforming the language of the work to an inclusive idea.”⁴⁸ The changes aimed to align the Bible with “the community of faith” according to Gal. 3:28 in which all people enjoy “equal value.”⁴⁹ The translators worked independently of ecclesiastical support and built upon the NRSV “as the starting point.”⁵⁰ Yet the translation also differed from the NRSV, especially due to its foreignizing strategy. It does not refer to God in masculine pronouns but uses a new metaphor for God, “Father-Mother.” The translation also tries to eliminate other forms of linguistic domination. For instance, it avoids referring to Jesus as “master,” and it recognizes that a condition of a person (e.g. “slavery”) does not describe this person’s full identity.⁵¹ Hence, the translation changes “slave” to “enslaved person” and “the poor” to “poor people.”

In 1996, a third inclusive Bible, the *New International Version; Inclusive Language Edition (NIVI)*, was published by the British evangelical-conservative publisher, Hodder and Stoughton.⁵² Based on a revision of the NIV, the translation was released in Britain only and created a firestorm of resistance within the U.S. evangelical Christian communities that delayed its publication there indefinitely. In fact, the publisher decided to have the NIV reviewed and published in an entirely new edition, for the US-market only, in 2002.⁵³ This translation also adopted generic terminology, such as “person” and “anyone,” when male-specific nouns in the source text include women and girls.

A fourth inclusive translation, *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation*, was published by the Jewish Publication Society in 2006.⁵⁴ Its editor and one of the main translators, David E.S. Stein, explained that this translation “adapts the New Jewish Publication Society (NJPS) version only with respect to *social gender*.”⁵⁵ He tried to imagine the “original audience” and “grasp why the text was written the way it was,” but he also acknowledged that “the goal was *not* to establish how the Torah’s actual audience historically construed the text.”⁵⁶ He considered seven factors when he identified social gender in the text: “inflection, status, role, anatomy, name, reflection, and outright designation.”⁵⁷ His translation is clearly sympathetic to issues of inclusive language, and so he affirmed that inclusive language is not merely “a figment of a post-modern feminist imagination” but belongs to “the biblical ethos.”⁵⁸ Stein modified this optimistic understanding of translation only when he believed the historical context required it. For instance, he translated the gender-inclusive phrase “whole Israelite community” as “Israelite community leadership” because, in his opinion, the original audience would have “probably” perceived this term as “a body of men.”⁵⁹ On other occasions Stein was bolder. He did not translate the tetragrammaton (YHWH) into English because he rejected the androcentric translation of “LORD” as inappropriate and did not want to use uniquely Jewish renditions, such as *ha-shem* (the Name). Thus, in *The Contemporary Torah* the tetragrammaton appears in unvocalized Hebrew letters, an unambiguously foreignizing translation decision.

A fifth inclusive translation appeared in the German language, published by the Gütersloher Verlagshaus in 2006 and entitled *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (abbreviated as *BigS*; lit.: “Bible in just language”).⁶⁰ This Bible translation does not limit inclusivity to gender but also aims at eliminating anti-Jewish stereotypes and highlighting social justice issues. The *BigS* is one of the most ambitious inclusive Bible translations to date, as it challenges androcentric and hierarchical linguistic patterns of exclusive language. Marie-Theres

Wacker who joined the editorial board after the publication of the *BigS*’s first edition explained:

What then is meant by inclusive or literally “just” (*gerechte*) language? In the preface to the translation the editors insist: “The name *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* does not claim that this translation is just and others unjust. Our translation confronts directly a foundational topic in the Bible, namely justice. This topic is central to this Bible translation in multiple ways.” More specifically, the new inclusive Bible translation is sensitive to three forms of justice: gender justice, the Jewish-Christian dialog, and social justice that relates to the circumstances of biblical times, which are often romanticized in other German language translations.⁶¹

The *BigS*, too, foreignizes the biblical text in multiple ways. It adapts the translation to contemporary German theological issues, such as gender justice, interfaith dialog, and social justice. The translation also foreignizes the name of God, which appears in highlighted font. The margins of each page offer alternative translation options for God that range from female and male capitalized pronouns for God (*SIE, ER*) to *Adonaj, Gott, or die Ewige* and *der Lebendige*. The idea to offer alternative nouns for the divinity is based on the theological position that God’s name is ultimately untranslatable. In this regard the *BigS* is similar to *The Contemporary Torah*. Both question the translatability of God’s name although each solves the problem differently. The *BigS* provides multiple options whereas *The Contemporary Torah* prints the tetragrammaton in Hebrew letters. Both strategies foreignize the text and teach readers to become aware of the theological and hermeneutical problem.⁶² In the case of the *BigS* readers are invited to appreciate “Vielstimmigkeit” (polyphony) as “a chance” because, as the editors of the *BigS* explain, “an ultimate translation into inclusive language is impossible because the parameters of our Bible translation always invite alternative translation possibilities.”⁶³ Since more than fifty translators brought their own views to the translation, individual preferences add to the polyphonous character of the *BigS*, ensuring that readers do not forget: this is a translation that pursues well-defined epistemological, hermeneutical, and theological goals. It should come as no surprise that inclusive Bible translations have created intense debates, emotional fervor, intellectual antagonism, and theological denunciation, as well as considerable relief to those who favor progressive theological discourse. Foreignizing the Bible comes at a price.

The following describes some of the responses to illustrate what happens when the Bible is foreignized, even when foreignization means that the Bible is inculturated into language patterns that assume egalitarian principles as promoted and often also practiced in contemporary English-speaking and German-speaking societies. The foreignization of the Bible uncovers that theological power, institutionalized assumptions about authority, and religious dogma are at stake.

3.b. About Power, Authority, and Dogma in the Public and Scholarly Reception of Inclusive Bible Translations

The appearance of inclusive Bible translations provoked resistance from church leaders, journalists, and scholars. Some translations, however, were met with silence. The translation published by the Priests for Equality received only one short book review in the scholarly literature.⁶⁴ The translation, *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version*, received some attention but was also largely ignored. For instance, David Neff characterized it as “a fit of misguided pastoral sensitivity” and “the PC Bible.”⁶⁵ He did not mean this as a compliment because, in his view, “Scripture is in many ways alien to the orthodoxies of our age.”⁶⁶ Rather, he bemoaned that this translation succumbed to these orthodoxies, and charged that the translators of this Bible “censor God’s word.” Thus he wished for this publication to “gather dust in America’s bookstores.”⁶⁷ Another reviewer, Roger A. Bullard, was similarly negative when he proclaimed that “[t]his ceases to be a translation.”⁶⁸ To him, “[t]his is not an inclusive version of Scripture” because “[i]t is exclusive to the point of being schismatic.”⁶⁹ He also suggested that “[t]he revisers are making a daring move, and performing a genuine service, by bringing this elitist growth out of the hothouse environment of the academy, where it can be carefully tended and offensive weeds pulled out, and into a public arena where no one is obliged to accept it.”⁷⁰ He then placed the translation into the lineage of Marcion, condemned heretic of the second century C.E. Bullard used strong words even for the fiery genre of the book review and eventually informed his readers:

I boarded the feminist bus early on; it has taken me far in a direction I needed to go, and I am grateful. I have learned much about people, about Scripture, and about God. But with this I feel the need to get off and walk back a bit in the open air.... You go on ahead if you like. You take the high road. I’ll take the low road.⁷¹

With this emotional farewell Bullard ended his review and presumably his support for feminist biblical interpretation.

This unfavorable judgment found companionship in the review of Joseph Jensen, who pronounced that “[i]t is not legitimate to present *as the Bible* what someone thinks it ought to have said.”⁷² He criticized the translators’ decision to replace “Father” for God with “Father-Mother,” stating: “[I]t is not legitimate to replace the images, metaphors, and analogies of Scripture with others of our own choosing.”⁷³ He did, however, not explain why the translation is illegitimate, apparently assuming the reasons are self-evident. One’s “own choosing” has no place in Bible translation, as if exclusive translations did not bring anachronistic language to the translation of the source text. Christian Right authors Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem classified *The New Testament and Psalms* translation as a “radical-feminist” version. They admit to ignoring it because it “clearly reject(s) the authority of the Bible and its claim to be the Word of God.”⁷⁴ Yet even a positive reviewer, Gail R. O’Day, stated that “the elimination of ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ language creates as many problems as it solves, depriving the church of valuable theological resources that might point the way to a new understanding of power and love.”⁷⁵ Few if any reviewers recognized the significance of this translation in the history of translating biblical literature into inclusive language.

In contrast, the reception of *The Contemporary Torah* was less heated, more contained, and more descriptive. Nathan Eubank considered the project “ambitious” and found the agenda of the translation “bold” and sometimes “too innovative for its own good.”⁷⁶ He even regretted that the translation advances the old idea that in Gen. 2:22-23 “Woman” was taken from “Human” as if to suggest that the first human was indeed male. Eubank also worried that the translation “masks” the rape in Gen. 19:4-5 when it translates v. 5 as, “that we may be intimate with them.”⁷⁷

Frantic responses erupted only with two of the inclusive translations, the NIVI and the *BigS*. The responses to the former expose the strong hierarchical anger within the Christian Right, and the responses to the latter illustrate the androcentric tendencies in German Protestant church life and secular German society. But like other responses, they demonstrate that inclusive Bible translations confront issues of power, authority, and dogma in religious institution and social practice.

When the *New International Version; Inclusive Language Edition* (NIVI), was published in Britain in 1995, it did not lead to major reactions. Only when the American publisher, Zondervan, and the International Bible Society (IBS) announced that an inclusive version would be released in the USA in 2000⁷⁸ did Christian Right organizations and individuals, such as *Focus on the Family*’s James Dobson and Jerry Falwell, begin criticizing the project heavily. For instance, *Focus on the Family* announced that “[w]e must resist even the subtlest form of language which would serve a particular cultural agenda.”⁷⁹ They threatened the publisher that they would cancel usage of the New International Version (NIV) in their churches and affiliated programs if the NIVI were to be published in the United States. The bookstore chain of the Southern Baptist Convention, LifeWay, threatened not to sell the translation.⁸⁰ Facing considerable financial loss, Zondervan and IBS tried to explain that the NIV and its inclusive version differed only minimally, but to no avail. The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) announced that the inclusive version contained many “inaccuracies” and had to be rejected.⁸¹

Interestingly, the opponents of inclusive Bible translations attempted to change the terminology from “inclusive” to “gender-neutral” in an effort to appear less prejudicial. They did not want to be known as advocating exclusive gender terminology. Accordingly, Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem suggested that inclusive translations are “gender-neutral” rather than “inclusive” because they avoid “male-oriented terms like ‘father,’ ‘son,’ and ‘his’.”⁸² Poythress and Grudem also stressed that they promoted “accuracy in translation” and did not “protect their complementarian views concerning men and women.”⁸³ In fact, in their opinion, “it is not really honoring to women in the long run if people settle for less than the most accurate Bible translation, just because they *think* it is more honoring to women.”⁸⁴ As a proof for the range of opinions among complementarians, they cited those who supported “gender-neutral translations.”⁸⁵ In their view, “the grip of feminist dogma on the modern psyche confronts us with a particular danger” because “[f]eminism attempts systematically to ban from the language patterns of thought that would be contrary to its program.”⁸⁶ Hence, to them, the stakes were high but not in terms of power, authority, and dogma. In their view, a choice had to be made whether “we follow the Bible alone” or whether “we trim it in order to fit in more comfortably with modern thought patterns.”⁸⁷ The dichotomy set up by Poythress and Grudem is clear. One either adheres to “accuracy” or allows inclusive language translations to modify the “Word of God” with culturally biased notions.

As a countermove to inclusive translation efforts, the Christian Right’s proponents published the “Colorado Springs Guidelines” in 1997⁸⁸ to provide directions “for sound translation.”⁸⁹ These guidelines reasserted exclusive translation principles. For instance, they affirmed the use of masculine pronouns when they appear in the text, masculine references to God, and the generic use of “man” for “humans.” For years, the debate raged back and forth, so much so that D. A. Carson offered “Pastoral Considerations: How To Avoid Bible Rage.”⁹⁰ He advised participants to talk with integrity, to slow down the debate, to respect the opponents, to avoid demonization of “the other side,” “to avoid manipulative language,” and to sign petitions carefully.⁹¹ His plea demonstrated the extent and depth of the passion, fervor, and anger involved.

The emotional aspect of this dispute also came to the foreground when the *BigS* hit German bookstores in October 2006. The publication created a major intellectual upheaval. Strong, and at times even shrill, reactions erupted in daily, weekly, and other newspapers and magazines, as well as in academic and ecclesiastical journals.⁹² Supporters articulated their appreciation for an inclusive Bible translation that brought important exegetical and theological developments of the past forty years to public and ecclesial attention in German-speaking countries. But in post-Christian contemporary Germany, a theological publication—no less a Bible translation—has rarely, if ever, produced such sweeping responses from the media and church. Already prior to the October publication date, Robert Leicht questioned the legitimacy of the project in the weekly newspaper, *Die Zeit*, in April 2006, alleging that the translation confuses the distinction between translation and interpretation and thus creates a “real danger” by misrepresenting the *Urtext* (source text).⁹³ Other reviewers, such as Heike Schmoll, charged that the translation overturned Luther’s principle, according to which the words should follow the meaning of the source text. Schmoll believed the new translation “does not allow the text to speak for itself” and so “reverses the principle into its absurd opposite.”⁹⁴ Still other reviewers, such as Edgar S. Hasse, expressed their astonishment that in the new translation not only male but also female shepherds come to see baby Jesus in the manger. He hoped that the polemic would resonate with a public that has not been asked before to imagine their faith in inclusive language.

Statements have also come from various church bodies. In March 2007, the highest committee of the *Evangelische Kirche Deutschland* (EKD), the umbrella organization of

the Protestant regional churches in Germany, explained that the new translation is not authorized for worship use in German Protestant churches and should not replace the 1984 version of the Martin Luther translation.⁹⁵ The Committee (“Rat der EKD”) advised that the *BigS* should function only as a “supplementary edition of the Bible” (“eine ergänzende Bibelausgabe”). It must be noted that the EKD does not have the *ius liturgicum* among its membership churches, and so the regional Protestant churches in Germany were not required to adhere to the EKD’s advice and, in fact, many did not. The EKD Committee criticized the translation for a lack of *Worttreue* (lit.: “closeness to the word”), arguing that translation and interpretation are different exegetical tasks. In the view of the Committee, the translation’s emphasis on inclusivity, on “just language,” distorts the biblical text—and the work is therefore more an interpretation than a translation. The Committee came close to rejecting this Bible’s goals toward gender justice, a rejection of anti-Judaism, and a promotion of social justice when it stated:

The notion of “just language” or “just language use” is unclear. It is also unclear why the three chosen criteria of “gender justice,” “justice regarding the Christian-Jewish dialog,” and “social justice” should succeed in “addressing the biblical foundational topic in a special way.” Used as translation principles, these criteria turn into preconceived ideas with which the text is read. This approach does not serve the understanding of the biblical text at all.⁹⁶

The Committee questioned the exegetical integrity of the translation team, which consisted of prolific scholars and professors of Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Ecclesial power, institutional authority, and theological dogma shaped the assessment of this and other inclusive Bible translations. Unfortunately, the new developments in translation studies have not played a major role in these debates because they have been dominated by massive socio-political, cultural, and theological struggles over power, authority, and dogma. Conflicts often surface when feminism meets Hebrew Bible studies, and Hos. 11:9c shall further illustrate the particularities of this dynamic. This passage shows that all Bible translations stand in socio-cultural and theo-political contexts, whether they acknowledge them or claim to strictly follow literalist-linguistic rules.

4. “For God am I and Not a Male”: The Case of Hos. 11:9c

That translators are interpreters,⁹⁷ creating biblical meanings in the vernacular language into which they translate the source text, can be illustrated with countless Bible texts. Both supporters and critics of inclusive Bible translations refer to many passages, especially from the New Testament,⁹⁸ and so here a Hebrew Bible verse shall illustrate the hermeneutical decisions present in biblical translation. Coming from the prophetic literature, Hos. 11:9c is not often mentioned in the inclusive language debate, even though it epitomizes the above mentioned disputes. For centuries, Hos. 11:9c was translated in androcentric vocabulary but with anthropomorphic meaning: “For I am God, and not man” (KJV).⁹⁹ Most translators and interpreters have assumed that the verse describes the chasm between God and humanity. After all, as famously articulated by twentieth-century theologian Karl Barth, God must be viewed as “totally other” (*totaliter aliter*), as totally different from humans.

Grounded in this conviction, scholars believe that Hos. 11:9c stresses this distinction between God and humanity. Hans-Walter Wolff, a renowned commentator on the book of Hosea, thus explained that in this verse “[t]he Holy One is the totally Other.”¹⁰⁰ Also Dietrich Ritschl viewed the gap between God and humanity as the hallmark of this passage that characterizes God as different from “man.”¹⁰¹ The tendency to consider Hos. 11:9c as a marker of difference between the Divinity and humanity also appears in John Collins’s introductory textbook, published in 2004. Collins translated v. 9c in accordance with the NRSV writing: “For I am God and no mortal.” This translation highlights the distinction between God and mortals in gender-inclusive language and so makes Barthian theology explicit in the word choice: “mortal” instead of “man.” Like other interpreters, Collins assumed that the passage emphasizes the difference between God and humans when he asked: “What, then, is the difference between God and a human being? It is not that humans are guided by emotion, and God is not, but that God can overcome the more destructive emotions and be guided by the better, whereas human beings often succumb to the worst.”¹⁰² The main idea of Hos. 11:9c in Collins’s view is that God is other from humans—the classic Barthian conviction. Other interpreters make a slightly different point. They stress that God’s love targets a group of people and not individuals.¹⁰³ Yet to most translators Hos. 11:9c articulates the unbridgeable gulf between divine and human nature. Singularity of biblical meaning triumphs and textual ambiguity is ignored.¹⁰⁴

The gender-neutralizing translation of Hos. 11:9c has, however, become problematic to feminist scholars who stressed that the Hebrew noun, translated generically as “man” or “mortal,” is the Hebrew noun, *’iš*. They charged that the Hebrew noun, *’iš* means “male” and that translators, otherwise relying on exclusive language, turn to inclusive language at the very moment when the biblical text makes a male-specific statement. For instance, Helen Schüngel-Straumann, a feminist Bible scholar, observed that the traditional distinction between divine and human behavior in v. 9c is not appropriate because the noun, *’iš*, does not refer to “ordinary *human* behavior, but something that is specifically *masculine*.”¹⁰⁵ Schüngel-Straumann explained: “[W]hen Hosea wants to speak of the ‘human being’ or ‘human behaviour’ so as to include women, he has other words at his disposal...”¹⁰⁶ Hence, in Hos. 11:9c the prophet does not use generic language but “wants to describe the contradiction between *’el*-behaviour and *’iš*-behaviour. It is masculine attitudes that YHWH refuses to adopt, not those that are genuinely and universally human!”¹⁰⁷ V. 9c emphasizes God’s non-maleness as an effort to counteract “all types of one-sided spiritualization” of God-talk. The metaphors for God as judge, king, hero, or even husband “were no longer useful,” and so the prophet resorts “to images that are better adapted to express his last and deepest experiences with his YHWH, the God of Israel.”¹⁰⁸

To Schüngel-Straumann, this theological insight reappears in the post-exilic poetry of Second Isaiah. There “‘God the mother’ expresses the prophetic or biblical experience of God just as well as ‘God the father’, as long as we keep in mind that *both* are images, and that neither aspect excludes the other.”¹⁰⁹ Unfortunately, the history of interpretation demonstrates that androcentric interpreters obscured feminine imagery for God and consciously or unconsciously “identify[ied] themselves completely with the divine.”¹¹⁰ This thorough affiliation with the male perspective has created intellectual and theological conditions in Christianity that think of God “implicitly or explicitly, as male, until ‘both the concept of God and that of the human being as a spiritual entity...are one-sidedly oriented to ‘patriarchal’ primal images’. That ultimately brings us to the equation of God with ‘father’ and human being with ‘man.’”¹¹¹ In short, to Schüngel-Straumann, the translation and interpretation of Hos. 11:9c illustrates the enduring identification for God with maleness and maleness with the divine.¹¹²

Surprisingly, the feminist observation on the translation of *’iš* finds support from some androcentric Christian conservative scholars. Vern S. Poythress, generally arguing against

inclusive Bible translations, underlined that *’iš* usually means “man.”¹¹³ Such is the case in Ps. 1, traditionally translated as, “Blessed is the man (*’iš*) who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked...” Inclusive translations turn the masculine singular noun into a plural expression, “Blessed are those who...” To Poythress, the masculine singular translation is preferable because the contrast of one man opposing many wicked people is much stronger than one group of undefined people standing against another group. In his view, “[n]othing in the immediate context [of Ps. 1] overturns the instinct to assign tentatively the meaning ‘the man,’ and to think first of all of a male human being rather than a female.”¹¹⁴ Poythress also endorsed the notion that “the reader must determine from the larger context whether the sex of the sample person functions to qualify the range of application in the sentence,”¹¹⁵ and in Ps. 1 “the starting point is the picture of one, and that one is male.”¹¹⁶ In short, Poythress made a strong case for translating *’iš* as a gender-specific noun. Other scholars affiliated with the Christian Right endorsed this line of reasoning in the 1997 Colorado Springs Guidelines.¹¹⁷ Point 4 of the Guidelines stated that “Hebrew *’ish* should ordinarily be translated ‘man’ and ‘men’...” Mark Strauss agreed that this Hebrew noun rarely carries a generic meaning, and thus “[w]hatever the word means in context is how it should be translated.”¹¹⁸ Key is “context,” Strauss exclaimed, and he then explained that context considerations ensure that translators avoid pursuing “a social agenda beyond the accurate interpretation of Scripture.”¹¹⁹

Yet despite the linguistic consensus between feminist and Christian Right scholars, feminist translations of Hos. 11:9c encounter massive resistance from other androcentric colleagues. Frederick J. Gaiser is among them. In a homiletical study on Hos. 11:1-9, he did not mention, cite, or refer to any feminist work but simply declared:

[S]ome interpreters count this picture among the maternal images of God in the Old Testament. There is, however, nothing in the text itself to compel that reading. Indeed, understanding God here as gentle father (with the text, I believe) may be an even stronger way to break gender stereotype than seeing God here as mother.¹²⁰

In his view, “there is nothing in the text itself” that invited interpreters to move beyond male-dominated images of God. Although Gaiser dealt mostly with Hos. 11:2-3, he also attempted to build his case by referring to v. 9c, declaring:

God is described as a parent, but not as a mortal. God is a father, but not a ‘man.’ God is personal, but not a human person: *כי אל אנכי ולא אִישׁ* - “for God am I, and no ‘ish” (v. 9), that is, no man, no mortal, no male human being, no human person, no human husband. In describing the relationship between God and Israel, only the image of the loving father will do—but it too will fail, for God cannot be captured in that image.¹²¹

Gaiser insisted on a generic translation of *’iš* despite considerable scholarship to the contrary, which he simply ignored. He asserted that v. 9c has to be translated as, “for I am God and no mortal.”¹²² To Gaiser, Hosea addresses the contrast between God and humans, and so preachers are taught that this verse reveals “the very heart of God.” Accordingly, Gaiser decreed that this verse is about God and “God’s own sense of who God is for the sake of the world.” It provides insight into who the biblical God is today.¹²³ God is totally other to humanity.

Gaiser did not worry that his exclusive translation for God might be a possible deterrent to contemporary people’s willingness to listen to the “gospel.” Some Christian Right interpreters considered this possibility, as for instance Mark Strauss who asked: “The important question is whether English masculine generics like ‘man,’ ‘he’ and ‘brother’ convey the same inclusive sense as their Hebrew and Greek counterparts and so represent the best translation...” Strauss recognized that in contemporary English “masculine generic terms are used today with much less frequency than in the past.”¹²⁴ Yet this insight did not hinder Gaiser from upholding his translation of Hos. 11:9c as if it were not contested.

The question, then, is whether it is not the role of biblical translators to give ordinary readers the tools to understand the complexities involved in translating a biblical passage such as Hos. 11:9c. In the case of Gaiser’s discussion, readers do not come to understand that various translation options exist and why they are contestable in today’s cultural-theological contexts. Consequently, many Bible readers hardly know that alternatives exist to exclusive Bible translations; they have not heard of translation studies, and they usually feel undereducated in making translation decisions. They also do not know much about the advances made by feminist biblical interpreters during the past forty years. A study of Hos. 11:9c offers manifold discussion points in this regard and illustrates the different and conflicting translation options. Clearly, then, more is at stake than the literalist-linguistic translation of the verse. An understanding of a translator’s hermeneutical interests is

necessary to decide whether God is seen as refusing to behave like a male or whether God is contrasted to humankind. Who are the translators, what are their hermeneutical convictions, and why do they translate the way they do? For sure, the translation of the Bible does not take place in neutral terrain. It really never has.

Translating the “Word of God” in Multiple Social Locations and with Theo-Political Power: Toward a Conclusion

The mapping of the controversies over inclusive Bible translations shows that indeed much is at stake. Not only does it matter who the translators are, what hermeneutical convictions they hold, and how they engage the socio-political and theo-cultural issues of their contexts; the controversies also illustrate the ongoing divisions about gender and other structures of oppression when people translate and thus interpret biblical literatures. Unfortunately, they often do not consider the larger scholarly contexts, such as translation studies, when they translate the Bible. Yet a field like translation studies has much to contribute to the controversies over inclusive Bible translations, especially since the debates focus so much on the viability and legitimacy of the translations. The lack of attention to related academic fields is unfortunate, and so this article began with a brief outline of recent developments in translation studies that highlighted Venuti’s work on the benefits of foreignization.

The article also outlined several inclusive Bible translations and their reception since the 1990s. The survey showed that issues of theo-political power, institutionalized assumptions about authority, and religious dogmas are at the heart of the controversies, although individual verses and questions of grammar and vocabulary usually obfuscate the deeper causes for the fervor, antagonism, and denunciation characteristic of many responses to inclusive Bibles.

Finally, the article illustrated the translation debacle with a closer look at Hos. 11:9c. This verse is particularly interesting because opponents of inclusive Bible translations argue for inclusive, i.e. gender-neutral, language. The insistence on gender-neutrality made feminist interpreters suspicious and they demonstrated that the generic translation of Hos. 11:9c conceals male vocabulary in the Hebrew text. Interestingly, in this particular case the turn toward gender neutrality serves androcentric interpreters to make a particular theological

argument that proves the point of translation theorists: translations are products of the cultural context in which they are made.

In conclusion, the controversies about inclusive Bible translations are less about literalist-linguistic differences that emerge in the nitty-gritty task of translating texts than about profound theo-cultural and socio-political disagreements. Inclusive Bible translations challenge established religious-institutional identities and practices that favor androcentrism and other structures of domination. Consequently, resistance to these translations is strong from both religious and secular powers and authorities. Demanding real-life changes toward socio-political and economic equality and justice, the translations remind readers of the promise that sacred texts hold: that an experience with the divine, as described in these texts, leads to changed human life on planet earth not driven by exploitation, greed, and oppression but by justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

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¹ Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), esp. 158-189.

² For a historical survey, see, e.g., Eugene A. Nida, “Bible Translation,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, ed. Mona Baker (London/New York: Routledge,

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³ Philip A. Noss, ed., *A History of Bible Translation* (Rome: Edizioni de storia e letteratura, 2007).

⁴ Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1969; 1982), 1. He articulated his views for the first time in *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964). For a discussion on Nida’s work in the context of recent biblical translation studies, see, e.g., Stephen Pattemore, “Framing Nida: The Relevance of Translation Theory in the United Bible Societies,” in *A History of Bible Translation*, ed. Philip A. Noss (Rome: Edizioni de storia e letteratura, 2007), 217-263.

⁵ Eugene A. Nida, William D. Reyburn, *Meaning Across Cultures* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981), 70.

⁶ Nida, *Theory and Practice*, 2.

⁷ Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (sec. ed.; London/New York: Routledge, 2001, 2008), 87. See also Christina Schäffner, “Skopos theory,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 235-238.

⁸ Itamar Even-Zohar, “The Position of Translated Literature Within the Literary Polysystem,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. L. Venuti (London/New York: Routledge, 2004), 204.

⁹ Susan Bassnett and André Lefevre, *Translation, History and Culture* (London/New York: Pinter Publishers, 1990). The development of feminist translation studies stands in this tradition; see, e.g., Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁰ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), 1-2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶ See also Peter Fawcett, “Ideology and Translation,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 106-111.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁸ Ibid., 42.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Michael Cronin, “Deschooling Translation: Beginning of Century Reflections on Teaching Translation and Interpreting,” in *Training for the New Millennium: Pedagogies for Translation and Interpreting*, ed. Martha Tennent (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 2005), 262.

²¹ See Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation*, esp. 158-189.

²² See, e.g., Mona Baker, “Translation Studies,” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, 277-280.

²³ Michaela Wolf, “Introduction: The Emergence of a Sociology of Translation,” in *Constructing a Sociology of Translation*, ed. Michaela Wolf and Alexandra Fukari (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2007), 1.

²⁴ Lawrence Venuti, *The Scandals of Translation: Towards an Ethics of Difference* (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 68.

²⁵ Naomi Seidman, *Faithful Renderings: Jewish-Christian Difference and the Politics of Translation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 13.

²⁶ Julia E. Smith, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testament; Translated Literally from the Original Tongues* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1876).

²⁷ Madeleine B. Stern, “The First Feminist Bible: The ‘Alderney’ Edition, 1876,” *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 34, no. 1 (January 1977): 28.

²⁸ See Smith’s Preface where she states: “...it was the literal meaning we were seeking;” in Smith, *The Holy Bible*, n.p. Charles H. Cosgrove remarks that Julia Smith’s literal translation did not “produce greater gender-inclusivity;” see Charles H. Cosgrove, “The First Attempt to Use Gender-Inclusive Language in English Bible Translation,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 30, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 267.

²⁹ Stern, “The First Feminist Bible, 28.

³⁰ Cosgrove, “The First Attempt to Use Gender-Inclusive Language,” 263-268.

³¹ Ibid., 264.

³² Ibid., 264.

³³ Quoted *ibid.*, 265.

³⁴ All quoted *ibid.*, 266-267.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 268.

³⁶ See, e.g., Robin Tolmach Lakoff, *Language and Woman’s Place* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London/Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Cheris Kramarae, *Women and Men Speaking: Frameworks for Analysis* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1981); Francine Harriet Wattman and Frank Anshen, *Language and the Sexes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Luise F Pusch, *Feminismus, Inspektion der Herrenkultur: Ein Handbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983); Luise F. Pusch, *Das Deutsche als Männersprache: Aufsätze und Glossen zur feministischen Linguistik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984); Deborah Cameron, *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader* (2nd ed.; London/New York: Routledge, 1998).

³⁷ So articulated by Bruce Metzger on behalf of the NRSV translation committee in the section “To the Reader;” see Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Third Edition with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books: NRSV* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), xix. See also the discussion of gender inclusive language, as it relates to the American Standard Bible published by the Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, *Making Women Visible: The Use of Inclusive Language with the ASB: A Report by the Liturgical Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988).

³⁸ *The Revised English Bible with the Apocrypha* (New Rochelle, NY: Oxford University Press/Cambridge University Press, 1989), ix.

³⁹ *The New Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), vi.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Walter Harrelson, “Inclusive Language in the New Revised Standard Version,” in *The Making of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger, Robert C. Dentan, Walter Harrelson (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 73-84, esp. 73: “The Committee responsible for producing the NRSV did not begin with a mandate to make the language inclusive. The decision was taken along the way...” Several other English Bible translations are sometimes referred to as gender-inclusive, see, e.g., *International Children’s Bible* (ICB) and the *Contemporary English Version* (1995), discussed by Vern S. Poythress & Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy: Muting the Masculinity of God’s Words* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 9-13; D. A. Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate: A Plea for Realism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 21-28.

⁴¹ *The Inclusive New Testament* (Brentwood, MD: Priests for Equality, 1994); *The Inclusive Psalms* (Brentwood, MD: Priests for Equality, 1997); *The Inclusive Hebrew Scriptures* (Brentwood, MD: Priests for Equality, 1999-2000); *The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Translation* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).

⁴² The organization “Priests for Equality” defines itself online: “Priests for Equality is a movement of women and men throughout the world – laity, religious and clergy – who work for the full participation of women and men in church and society. We are a grass-roots organization committed to creating a culture where sexism and exclusion are behind us and equality and full participation are the order of the day. We challenge sexism in all its forms wherever we may find it and offer an alternative vision that frees and empowers people.” See <http://cso.quixote.org/node/140> [accessed February 28, 2010]. See also the “preface” of *The Inclusive Bible*, v.

⁴³ *The Inclusive Bible*, v.

⁴⁴ See, e.g., the important publication by Letty M. Russell (ed., in cooperation with the Task Force on Sexism in the Bible, Division of Education and Ministry, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.), *The Liberating Word: A Guide to Nonsexist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976). The volume was translated into German: *Als Mann und Frau ruft er uns: vom nicht-sexistischen Gebrauch der Bibel*, trans. by Ann Heuwing-Arnold and Armand Arnol (München: Pfeiffer, 1979). See also the following publications sponsored by the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A.: Victor Roland Gold, et al., *An Inclusive Language Lectionary*, 3 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983, 1984, 1985; Barbara A Withers (ed.; National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, Division of Education and Ministry), *Language and the Church: Articles and Designs for Workshops*, New York: Division of Publication Services, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., 1984; Burton H. Throckmorton, “Why the Inclusive Language Lectionary?” *Christian Century* (August 1-8, 1984): 742; Burton H. Throckmorton, “Inclusive Language and the Bible,” *Religious Education: The Journal of the Religious Education Association and the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education* 80, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 523-538.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, vi.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

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- ⁴⁷ Victor Roland Gold, Thomas L. Hoyt, Sharon H. Ringe, Susan Brooks Thistelthwaite, Burton H. Throckmorton Jr., Barbara Withers, eds., *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, viii-ix.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ix.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, x.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii.
- ⁵² *New International Version Popular Edition, Inclusive Language* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997).
- ⁵³ *Today’s New International Version (TNIV)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002; 2005).
- ⁵⁴ *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2006).
- ⁵⁵ David E. S. Stein, “Preface”, in *The Contemporary Torah*, v.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xiii.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, xv.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, xix.
- ⁶⁰ Ulrike Bail, Frank Crüsemann, Marlene Crüsemann, Erhard Domay, Jürgen Ebach, Claudia Janssen, Hanne Köhler, Helga Kuhlmann, Martin Leutzsch und Luise Schottroff, eds., *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006). Another German-language Bible translation, the “Neue Zürcher Bibelübersetzung (NZB),” did not succeed in a systematic application of inclusive language principles despite some efforts; for more information, see Ursula Sigg-Suter, Esther Straub, Angela Wäffler-Boveland, *...und ihr werdet mir Söhne und Töchter sein: Die Neue Zürcher Bibel feministisch gelesen* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2007).
- ⁶¹ Marie-Theres Wacker (trans. and ed. by Susanne Scholz), “The New Inclusive Bible Translation in the Context of (Post)Modern Germany,” *SBL Forum* n.p. (April 2008): <http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=764> [accessed February 28, 2010].
- ⁶² Ulrike Bail et al., “Einleitung,” in *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*, 16.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁶⁴ A. G. Auld, “Review of *The Inclusive Hebrew Scriptures II The Prophets* by Craig R. Smith and Mark D. Buckley, eds.,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 30, no. 5 (2006): 86. The scholarly silence signifies what is at stake.

⁶⁵ David Neff, “Lost in the Translation: Can the New Inclusive Bible’s Human One, Child of Father-Mother God, Save Us?” *Christianity Today* 39, no. 2 (February 6, 1995): 19.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Roger A. Bullard, “Review of *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* by Thomas L. Hoyt et al.,” *Encounter* 57, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 285.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 287.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Joseph Jensen, “Review of *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* by Thomas L. Hoyt et al.,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 60, no. 3 (July 1998): 571.

⁷³ Ibid., 572. For a non-polemical review, see Bart D. Ehrman, “Review of *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* by Sharon Ringe et al.,” *Review of Biblical Literature* (6/26/2000): www.bookreviews.org.

⁷⁴ Poythress & Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, 5.

⁷⁵ Gail R. O’Day, “Probing an Inclusive Scripture,” *Christian Century* (July 3-10, 1996): 694.

⁷⁶ Nathan Eubank, “Review of *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* by David E.S. Stein, ed.,” *Bible and Critical Theory* 3, no. 3 (2007): 42.3

⁷⁷ Ibid. See also Linda S. Schearing, “Review of *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* by David E.S. Stein, ed.,” *Review of Biblical Literature* 10 (2008): www.bookreviews.org [also published in *The Bible Translator* 58, no. 3 (July 2007): 105-110]; John Jarick, “Review of *The Contemporary Torah: A Gender-Sensitive Adaptation of the JPS Translation* by David E.S. Stein, ed.,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32, no. 5 (June 2008): 69-70.

⁷⁸ This translation is called *Today’s New International Version (TNIV)*. For more information on the publication process of the TNIV, see Craig L. Bloomberg, “Today’s New International Version: The Untold Story of a Good Translation,” *The Bible Translator* 56, no. 3 (July 2005): 187-211.

⁷⁹ Aida Besançon Spencer, “Power Play: Gender Confusion and the NIV,” *Christian Century* 114, no. 20 (July 2-9, 1997): 618.

⁸⁰ John Dart, “Gender and the Bible: Evangelicals Wrangle Over New Translation,” *Christian Century* 119, no. 14 (July 3-10, 2002): 11.

⁸¹ For a detailed description of the responses, see John Dart, “TNIV Bible Braves Gender-Inclusive World,” *Christian Century* 119, no. 4 (February 13-20, 2002): 10-11.

⁸² Poythress & Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, 2. For a review that criticizes this book for its “constant pejorative depiction of feminism as an ideology,” see Beverley Clack, “Review of *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy* by Vern S. Poythress and Wayne A. Grudem,” *Theology* 104, no. 821 (Sep.-Oct. 2001): 368.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁵ They are: Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate*; Mark L. Strauss, *Distorting Scripture? The Challenge of Bible Translation & Gender Accuracy* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998); Craig L. Blomberg, “Today’s New International Version: The Untold Story of a Good Translation,” *The Bible Translator* 56, no. 3 (July 2005): 187-211; Darrell L. Bock, “Do Gender-Sensitive Translations Distort Scripture? Not Necessarily,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 45, no. 4 (December 2002): 651-669. For an organization siding with the opponents to inclusive Bible translations, see also the website of The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood at www.cbmw.org and the numerous articles published there about the debate on inclusive Bible translations. See, e.g., E. Earle Ellis, “Dynamic Equivalence Theory, Feminist Ideology, and Three Recent Bible Translations,” *Expository Times* 115, no. 1 (October 2003): 7-12; also available online at <http://www.cbmw.org/Resources/Articles/Dynamic-Equivalence-Theory-Feminist-Ideology-and-Three-Recent-Bible-Translations> [accessed June 23, 2009].

⁸⁶ Poythress & Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, 298.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* This dualistic view is also criticized as inadequate because it lacks an understanding of the complexity of the hermeneutical positions available; see, e.g., Richard S. Hess, “ADAM, FATHER, HE: Gender Issues in Hebrew Translation,” *The Bible Translator* 56, no. 3 (July 2005): 144-153.

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Wayne Grudem, *What’s Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?* (Libertyville, IL: Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1997). The Guidelines

are available online, e.g., here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colorado_Springs_Guidelines [accessed February 28, 2010].

⁸⁹ For an inside explanation on the Colorado Springs Guidelines, see Poythress & Grudem, *The Gender-Neutral Bible Controversy*, 315.

⁹⁰ See his book Carson, *The Inclusive Language Debate*, 193-197.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² For further information, see the website supported by the *BigS* editors at <http://www.bibel-in-gerechter-sprache.de>. For a discussion in English, see Susanne Scholz, “The *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (*BigS*): The Secular Press, *Kirchenherren*, and Theology Professors React To a New German Inclusive Bible Translation,” *SBL Forum*, n.p. (April 2008): <http://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?articleId=760>; Irmtraud Fischer, “Why the Agitation? The Status of the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* in Academia and the Churches,” *SBL Forum*, n.p. (April 2008): <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=763>; Wolfgang Stegemann, “Translation or Interpretation: Intense Controversy about the New German Translation of the Bible,” *SBL Forum*, n.p. (April 2008): <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=762>; Luzia Sutter Rehmann, “What is the *Bibel in gerechter Sprache*? Assumptions, Process, and Goals of a New German Bible Translation,” *SBL Forum*, n.p. (April 2008): <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=761>; Marie-Theres Wacker, “The New Inclusive Bible Translation in the Context of (Post)Modern Germany,” *SBL Forum*, n.p. (April 2008): <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=764>.

⁹³ Robert Leicht, “Kein Wort sie wollen lassen stahn,” *Die Zeit* Nr. 15 (06.04.2006): <http://bibeluebersetzung.ch/fisch/060406.pdf> [accessed February 28, 2010]. See also the discussion by academic theologians, such as Ingo U. Dalferth, “Der Ewige und die Ewige: Die ‘Bibel in gerechter Sprache’—weder richtig noch gerecht, sondern konfus,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (November 18, 2006). Online: www.nzz.ch/2006/11/18/li/articleEBIFU.html. And even some feminist theologians of the first generation opposed the translation; see, e.g., Elisabeth Gössmann, “Anfang der Weisheit: Die weibliche Tradition der Bibelauslegung und die ‘Bibel in gerechter Sprache’,” *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (14. December 2006). Online: <http://www.nzz.ch/2006/12/14/fe/articleEPVQL.html>.

⁹⁴ Heike Schmolli, “Befreit zur religiösen Mündigkeit,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine* Nr. 253 (October 30, 2006): 1.

⁹⁵ Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands, “Die Qualität einer Bibelübersetzung hängt an der Treue zum Text: Stellungnahme des Rates der EKD zur ‘Bibel in gerechter Sprache’,” *epd-Dokumentation* 17-18 (April 24, 2007): 14-15.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁷ For a critical assessment of this notion, see Axel Bühler, “Translation as Interpretation,” in *Translation Studies: Perspectives on an Emerging Discipline*, ed. Alessandra Riccardi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 56-74

⁹⁸ See, e.g., Blomberg, “Today’s New International Version,” 187-211; Burton H. Throckmorton, Jr., “Language and the Bible,” *Religious Education* 80, no. 4 (Fall 1985): 523-538. For a discussion on the terminology in the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, see, e.g., S. T. Kimbrough, Jr., “Theological Table-Talk: Bible Translation and the Gender of God,” *Theology Today* 46, no. 2 (July 1989): 195-202.

⁹⁹ See also the German Luther Bible: “Denn ich bin Gott und nicht ein Mensch.” The NRSV, REB, and NJB continue the trend. The NRSV and REB translate v. 9c, “for I am God, not a mortal;” and the NJB offers: “for I am Lord, not man.” For a general discussion on the translation origins of male-hierarchical terminology for God, see, e.g., Kristin De Troyer, “The Names of God: Their Pronunciation and Their Translation: A Digital Tour of Some of the Main Witnesses,” *lectio difficilior: European Electronic Journal for Feminist Exegesis* 2 (2005). Online at: http://www.lectio.unibe.ch/05_2/troyer_names_of_god.htm.

¹⁰⁰ Hans-Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, trans. Gary Stansell, ed. Paul D. Hanson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 202.

¹⁰¹ Dietrich Ritschl, “God’s Conversion: An Exposition of Hosea 11,” *Interpretation* 15 no 3 (July 1961): 298-299.

¹⁰² John J. Collins, *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 303-304. So also Jopie Siebert-Hommers, “‘With Bands of Love’: Hosea 11 as ‘Recapitulation’ of the Basic Themes in the Book of Hosea,” in *Unless Some One Guide Me...: Festschrift for Karel A. Deurloo* (ACEBT Sup 2), ed. J. W. Dyk et al. (Maastricht: Uitgeverij Shaker Publishing, 2001), 171-172.

¹⁰³ Robert Merrihew Adams, “How Can I Give You Up, O Ephraim?” *Theology Today* 63, no. 1 (April 2006): 88-93.

¹⁰⁴ See, e.g., also Richard D. Pearson, “Parental Love as Metaphor for Divine-Human Love,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46, no 2 (June 2003): 205-216.

¹⁰⁵ Helen Schüngel-Straumann, “God as Mother in Hosea 11,” in *A Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 211. For a detailed engagement of and challenge to Schüngel-Straumann’s exegesis, see Siegfried Kreuzer, “Gott als Mutter in Hosea 11,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 169, no. 2 (1989): 123-132, esp. 126-128. Kreuzer’s critique of Schüngel-Straumann illustrates the androcentric tendency of dismissing socially located exegesis and adhering dogmatically to empiricist-scientific epistemological principles without acknowledging this bias.

¹⁰⁶ Schüngel-Straumann, “God as Mother,” 211-212.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 212.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 217. For the Christian concept of God as male and its connection to androcentrism, see also Megan Walker, “The Challenge of Feminism to the Christian Concept of God,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 66 (March 1989): 4-20.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 217-218. For a discussion on the impact of feminine images for God, see Fredrica R. Halligan, “WomanChurch: Toward a New Psychology of Feminine Spirituality,” *Pastoral Care* 44, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 379-389.

¹¹² Another feminist interpreter, Marie-Theres Wacker, maintains that Hos. 11:1-9 depicts a motherly and fatherly God in contrast to the warrior-masculine God elsewhere; see Marie-Theres Wacker, *Figurationen des Weiblichen im Hosea Buch* (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 295-296.

¹¹³ Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Gender in Bible Translation: Exploring a Connection with Male Representatives,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 60 (1998): 227. He articulated his conviction in the negative stating: “‘iš does not *always* mean ‘man’ and occurs in idiomatic constructions with the sense of ‘each other’.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 228.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ The list of “The Original Guidelines Established at the ‘Conference on Gender-Related Language in Scripture’ (May 27, 1997)” is reprinted in Mark Strauss, “Linguistic and Hermeneutical Fallacies in the Guidelines Established at the ‘Conference on Gender-Related Language in Scripture,’” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41, no. 2 (June 1998): 261-262. See also footnote 86.

¹¹⁸ Strauss, “Linguistic and Hermeneutical Fallacies,” 244.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 245.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 204.

¹²¹ Frederick J. Gaiser, “Preaching God: Hosea 11:1-11,” *Word & World* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 205. Other interpreters do not mention the gender issue at all; see, e.g., Walter Brueggemann, “The Recovering God of Hosea,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 30, no. 1 (2008): 5-20; Barbara M. Leung Lai, “Hearing God’s Bitter Cries (Hosea 11:1-9): Reading, Emotive-Experiencing, Appropriation,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 26, no. 1 (2004): 24-49. Others mention and sometimes reject the gender reference in Hos. 11:9; see, e.g., Merryl Blair, “‘God Is an Earthquake’: Destabilising Metaphor in Hosea 11,” *Australian Biblical Review* 55 (2007): 1-12; Joy Philip Kakkanattu, *God’s Enduring Love in the Book of Hosea: A Synchronic and Diachronic Analysis of Hosea 11,1-11* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 89 n324.

¹²² Ibid., 205-206.

¹²³ Ibid., 208.

¹²⁴ Strauss, “Linguistic and Hermeneutical Fallacies,” 260.

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