

# A narrative frame analysis of the 1933 Afrikaans Bible

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## Abstract

The first complete Bible translation in Afrikaans was published in 1933. This article focuses on describing and analysing this translation. Given new developments in translation studies, one should not evaluate a translation normatively but rather describe it. Any new translation constructs a domesticated representation of a foreign text and culture, which simultaneously must be intelligible for its readers even while it unavoidably promotes, however subtly, an ideology. Thus, the representation consists of the linguistically inscribed preferences of the translator(s) concerning the choice and construction of discourses in Bible translation. The 1933 translation is analysed and explained with respect to the ways in which particular cultural, political and religious identities were formed. Some corrections to current, inaccurate perceptions about the 1933 translation are provided by a consideration of issues such as the context of the translation, its source text, the translation team, the translation process and the sociocultural impact of the translation.

## Introduction

The first Biblical book translated into Afrikaans was SJ du Toit's translation of *Genesis*, which appeared in 1893. The translation of other biblical books followed – *Matthew* (1895), *Revelation* (1898), *Song of Songs* (1905), *Psalms* (1907), *Acts* and *Mark* (1908) – but the translations were never fully accepted, and thus Afrikaans-speaking readers continued to use the Dutch Authorised Version, which was published in 1637. In 1916, at the Synod held in the Province of the Free State, the Dutch Reformed Church decided that an Afrikaans translation should be undertaken, and in 1917 the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) offered to fund the costs involved with the translation and the publication of the text, thus indicating their support of this initiative. The Afrikaans target text, however, had to coincide with the Dutch Authorised Version. The Dutch Authorised Version thus functioned in actuality as the source text, which was then counterchecked with the Hebrew and Greek source texts. The *Vier Evangelie en die Psalme*, published in 1922, served as a trial edition, but was rejected by its Afrikaans readers because the language used in the translation did not reflect that of the Afrikaans readers. The project was reconceptualised, and in 1929 the *Vier Evangelies en die Boek van die Psalms* was published. The completed Bible was commissioned in 1933, and revised in 1953.

To date no research has been conducted on the contextual framework within which the 1933 translation originated. This issue will therefore be examined in this article which is a reworking and further analysis of a talk at the 75th celebration of the Afrikaans Bible published as Naudé (2009). Furthermore, incorrect or misleading perceptions of the 1933 translation will also be rectified. It should, however, be noted that this article is not a historical overview of the translation process of the 1933 translation, for which Nienaber (1934) provides a sufficient historical description. Instead, a subdiscipline of translation theory, namely narrative frame theory, will act as the theoretical framework for this article (see Wilt 2002; Baker 2006; Wendland 2008). This theory will be discussed in greater detail in the next section; and in the following section the various contextual frames of the 1933 translation will be described.

## Theoretical framework for the description of translation

Gideon Toury (1980:13, 37, 43-45) defines translation as any target language text that is accepted as a translation within the target language audience. According to this definition, translation should be viewed as a cluster concept (encompassing the ideas of transfer, realisation, transcoding, interpretation, etc) which provides a means for defining and representing the self. Approval of the prepared Bible

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translation was of great importance to the translation team, and it was realised when the 1933 translation was approved on 27 August 1933. The following question, however, is posed in this article: What characteristics contributed to the acceptance of this translation? These can be determined through a theoretical approach to translation studies as well as through other aspects of translation practice. According to recent trends in translation studies, a theoretical approach to translation should distance itself from a normative approach (i.e. evaluating a translation as correct/good/reliable versus incorrect/bad/unreliable) to a more functional and descriptive approach (ie describing the manner in which the translation is produced). The analysis that follows describes and explains the appearance and impact of the 1933 translation. However, it is first necessary to describe developments in translation theory in order to provide a framework for the analysis.

Until the 1980s a translation was weighed against its adherence to its source text. This approach was normative and prescriptive. Since the emergence of text linguistics and sociolinguistics, the attempt was made to redefine the term **equivalence**, and this approach resulted in the end of sentence-based translations. Two different approaches were developed, the first of these being text oriented to linguistic translation models (translation as the semantic and pragmatic reconstruction of the source text) (House 1981; Neubert & Shreve 1992; Hatim & Mason 1990). The second approach emphasised the function of linguistic structures in communication, which resulted in sociolinguistic translation models. However, it was soon noticed that these approaches were too limited, and not conducive to an adequate representation of the translation process. It is not possible, as the equivalence-based theory implies, to produce a translation that adheres directly to the original source text. As translation studies gained ground as a scientific discipline, more problems concerning equivalence became evident. Scholars such as Katherina Reiss and Hans Vermeer (1984) were of the opinion that the most important issue was not a translation's adherence to its source text, but rather the fulfilment of the function (Greek *skopos*) for which it was intended; thus the theoretical framework of this approach is known as *skopos* theory. This debate gave life to Christiane Nord's (1991; 1997; 2005) functionalistic approach wherein the function of a translation is of utmost importance. Thus, according to Nord, each Bible translation should be weighed against the function for which it was intended. The role of translation briefs – explicit instructions to the translators concerning the type of translation that is to be produced in accordance with the function that the translation is intended to fulfil – cannot be overstated.

A new field in translation studies, namely corpus-based research, posited that the language used in translation differs to some extent from that of the source text. This conflict between the target language and the source language results in the development of a “third code”. This “third code” should be understood as a compromise between the norms and patterns of the source and the target language. This focus on translation-specific elements rather than language- or cultural-specific elements is described by Baker (1993:243-247) as one of the universal elements of translation, which tends towards explicitness, the ruling out of ambiguity, and conventionalism. However, it is inevitable that subjectivity and reformulation will occur in translation (Bassnett-McGuire 1991[1980]; Bassnett & Lefevere 1990), since ultimately everything that is known of spoken and written language is subject to interpretation (Steiner 1998). Theo Hermans (1985) indicates in *The manipulation of literature* that translations are one of the most effective primary literary resources of cultural manipulation. This resource can effectively be utilised in large social institutions, educational systems, editorial companies, and even the government. Churches are able to request Bible translations, governments are able to support national epics, schools are able to educate learners using translations of important texts, royalty are able to become the patrons of heroic conquests, and social regimes are able to endorse translations of social realisms; each institution is able to use translations to advance their own objectives concerning ideology and cultural power. This manipulation hypothesis, which was proposed in 1985, led to a cultural turn in translation studies in the following decade. This change from translation-as-text to translation-as-culture was defined as **the cultural change** by Mary Snell-Hornby (1995). The cultural change coincided with the publication of the volume *Translation, history and culture*, authored by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (1984). Bassnett and Lefevere understood the cultural change as a metaphor for the shift away from the focus on language. This in turn led to the focus on the interaction between translation and culture, including the manner in which culture influences and restricts translation. This impact also influences other factors, such as context, history and convention. Furthermore, when the texts do not function in their cultural settings, Bassnett and Lefevere rejected the comparisons between the source texts and the translations, and highlighted instead the shifts that occurred during translation and rewriting, not only in terms of poetry, but also with respect to ideology and power. In this regard Lawrence Venuti (1995:1, 19-20) refers to the **(in)visibility of the translator**, and links this phrase to the translator's context and work in contemporary Anglo-American culture with its cultural belief that a translation should read fluently. In Venuti's opinion the types of invisibilities become evident in the manner in which translators translate.

In other words, the translator is tasked with the creation of an idiomatic and fluent target text, while bearing in mind the reception of these texts in the target culture. The acceptability of translations to publishers, reviewers and readers is thus subjected to the fluency of the translation and its adherence to the source text. In this regard Venuti (1995:19-20) links the invisibility of the translator to the translation strategy of indigenisation, which entails that an unfamiliar text should be edited in light of the cultural values of the target culture. The implication is that a target text should not reflect the “otherness” of the source text. Indigenisation thus coincides with Schleiermacher’s description of translation as the movement from the “otherness” of the source text to the reader of the target text.

In order to explain and interpret the 1933 Afrikaans Bible translation **as a translation**, narrative frame theory (Wilt 2002; Baker 2006; Wendland 2008), a recent development in translation studies provides the critical theoretical framework. This theory posits that no translation choice can be regarded apart from its implications in real life; we are thus forced to interpret individual choices as embedded and contributing to a concrete social reality. The process of providing a framework for recurrent translation choices implies that structures (or frames) should be developed for interpreting these choices. In this study the following frames will be examined: a sociocultural frame, a translation studies frame, an organisational frame, and a linguistic frame. In order to determine the nature of the dominant ideological stance of the Afrikaans target culture in the 1933 translation, the following analyses were done:

- The nature of the 1933 translation was examined in terms of the working methods of the translators on both macro- and micro-structural levels.
- Critical contemporary documents – journal articles, literary histories, reviews, letters and personal documents – were examined to determine their viewpoints with respect to the translation.

### **Sociocultural frame of the 1933 translation**

#### *Transitional periods in South African history*

The Afrikaans translation of the biblical source texts should not be examined as an isolated event, but as an event that occurred in a specific historical context. This context will be briefly discussed.

The colonial and postcolonial history of South Africa is divided into four main periods. During the Dutch period (1652-1795), the Dutch Authorised Version was used. This period was characterised by merchant shipping and slavery, which was eventually mitigated by an emancipation policy. During the British colonial period (1795-1924), a number of individual biblical books were translated into Afrikaans by SJ du Toit; these books were the precursors of the entire translation. The Afrikaner period (1924-1990) is marked by the 1933/53 Afrikaans Bible translation at the beginning and by the *Nuwe Afrikaanse Bybel* (1983) at its end. This period was characterised by modernism and the stress on human rights. The current democratic period (since 1994) has seen the production of other translations, such as the *Afrikaanse Bybel vir dowe* (Afrikaans Bible for the deaf) and the *Boodskap* (Message). This period is characterised by a new world order and globalisation.

#### *Sociopolitical environment*

Twentieth century South African society has its roots in the Dutch period (1652-1795). At that time settlement was based in the Western Cape, where a halfway station was located. This station, established by the East India Company, provided supplies to passing ships en route to the East, but it could scarcely provide for its own needs. For this reason Van Riebeeck, the founder and governor of the halfway station, allowed his officials to produce agricultural products as free burghers. Giliomee (2004:16) mentions in *The Afrikaners* that the East India Company commissioned preachers, comforters of the sick, and educators as early as the 17th century. The Company also ordered that the Dutch language and the Reformed faith should be taught in every church and in every school.

By 1709 the population had increased to about 3 500 people; the Khoi-Khoi, an independent native population, were not, however, included in this number. In 1795 the British regime came into power and under their control the privileged status of selected civilians, the free burghers, ceased. The German, French and Dutch colonists, however, still regarded themselves as a privileged elite.

During the 1830s the British government called on the boers, the farmers who were descendants of Dutch colonialists, to enrol for military service; but they protested, regarding themselves as free burghers. After Ordinance 50 of 1828 all civilians, including the Khoi-Khoi, were rendered equal in terms of the law. The Khoi-Khoi, however, rarely performed military service and paid fewer taxes than

the other civilians, and were therefore referred to as *knapsakburgers* (begging civilians). In all official documents before 1891, the government referred to Dutch- or Afrikaans-speaking whites as “civilians”, because they still regarded themselves as privileged. It is likely that the apartheid policy of the 20th century had its roots in the Dutch period, when certain individuals attained privileged civilian status (Giliomee 2004:17-18,54).

Giliomee (2004:85) states that the civilians adjusted well to two major changes in the social order during the British colonial period. These changes were the emancipation of the Khoisan and the release of slaves. During the middle of the 19th century the Afrikaner elite started to accept the ideals of social progress. They focused on nonracial voting rights, a comprehensive democracy, separation of the church and state, secular education and scientific research. Equal representation in terms of the law and universal voting rights were accepted, but full equality in all spheres of life was rejected. This resistance was still securely rooted in the hierarchical structuring of society during the Dutch period.

As a result of this social history, different relationships developed between the civilians (white colonists) and the “black people”. One of these relationships was characterised by evil and even inhumane actions. The worst case was the trade in *swart ivoor* (black ivory): the slave trade. A second kind of relationship was characterised by paternalism, especially with respect to domestic workers and indentured children. In these circumstances it was the employers’ belief that they could help their employees to become civilised by teaching them how to work, punishing them when they did wrong, and rewarding them when they did well. The liberal thinker Alfred Hoernlé, a professor during the 1930s, stated that employees assimilated with their employers’ culture and even adopted Afrikaans as their mother tongue (Giliomee 2004:152-153).

In 1889 three interdependent ideologies in South Africa were described by Sir Hercules Robinson, the governor of the Cape Colony. These ideologies were as follows: republicanism (the ideal of an independent Afrikaner republic personified by Paul Kruger, the Afrikaner President of the former Transvaal Republic), imperialism (the direct domination by the British Empire advocated by Lord Milner, the British Governor of the former Cape Colony) and colonialism (the maintenance of economic and cultural ties to Dutch colonial roots championed by the politician Hofmeyr, who advocated for the continued use of Dutch as opposed to the new emerging language of Afrikaans). Republicanism was temporarily suppressed during the South African War (formerly referred to as the Anglo-Boer War) (1899-1902) and by 1910, with the formation of the Union of South Africa ruled by its own governor, imperialism also departed from the scene. South Africans developed their own form of statehood and started to protect their own freedoms. The South African population was, however, still divided into three groups: the British, the Afrikaners and the indigenous population (Giliomee 2004:250-280). The Afrikaners soon started to develop their own form of nationalism, which was linked to the 1914 Rebellion, in which they attempted to break free from British rule. This in turn set the stage for the production of the first complete Afrikaans Bible translation.

Up until the 20th century Afrikaans was rejected as a cultural language, primarily because Afrikaans was not perceived to be a prestigious language. The Afrikaans language was considered to be inflexible, and it was thus unacceptable to use the language in official or authoritative contexts. By 1872 it was evident that the Dutch Bible of 1637 had become unintelligible to Afrikaans speakers, and thus the need for an Afrikaans Bible became crucial. With this in mind the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (Society of Real Afrikaners) was established, their main objective being the production of an Afrikaans Bible translation. The Dutch Reformed Church, however, prohibited the Bible from being translated into Afrikaans, and furthermore prohibited that any sermon should be delivered in Afrikaans. These strictures, however, caused the movement to establish Afrikaans identity and for its culture to flourish. With his novel *Di Koningin fan Skeba* (The Queen of Sheba) (1898), SJ du Toit illustrated that Afrikaans was indeed able to fulfil the same cultural and communicative role as the other dominant South African languages, English and Dutch. Thus Du Toit was able to singlehandedly create an identity for Afrikaans as a cultural language (Naudé 2008). For this reason his novel was written in the contemporary Afrikaans of his day, and not in Dutch as was his novel *Sambesia* (1984), or in English as was his book *Rhodesia past and present* (1897). Du Toit’s narrative in *Di Koningin van Skeba* was spatially and chronologically distanced from South Africa. It was set in the former Rhodesia and travelled back in time to the days of the Old Testament and Ancient Egypt. With this wide-ranging setting, Du Toit was able to illustrate that it was indeed possible to write about any topic in Afrikaans, or to translate from any language into Afrikaans, even if the subject was not related in any way to the Afrikaans language. The same can be said for his travel narratives concerning his two trips to Europe and another to the Near East (mainly Egypt and Israel/Palestine) (Du Toit 1881; 1883; 1886; Du Toit & Du Toit 1945). In those writings he used the Bible without objecting to the church’s prohibition of the use of Afrikaans in Bible translation. D’Assonville (1999:329-335) describes the direct influence of SJ du Toit on GS Preller, who was a major influence in the promotion of the Afrikaans language.

Evidence has come to light of correspondence between the two, starting on 30 March 1905, on the position of the Afrikaans language.

The most important motivation for the translation of the Bible into Afrikaans was that of the language's official position. JD du Toit (Totius) indicated in 1914 that the readers of the Dutch Authorised Version no longer had a sound knowledge of the Dutch language (Du Toit *s.a.*; Venter 1977). He also mentioned, in his versification of the Psalms, the importance of Afrikaans.

Only one question now remains: Did any Afrikaner organisation have a possible influence on the translation of the Bible into Afrikaans? According to Mariana Kriel (2008), the Afrikanerbond (Afrikaner Society), the former Broederbond (Brothers Society), had only a very small or negligible influence in the translation of the Bible. In 1928 the Afrikanerbond consisted of 263 members, with 11 branches in the Transvaal and one in the Free State. It had no branches in the Cape or in Natal. According to Kriel's analysis of the themes of the Bond's council meetings as well as their other projects, it is evident that religion was not an issue discussed at these events. From the information that is available to us, it seems that most of the Bond's focus fell on sport rather than on religious projects. Zaaiman (2008) indicates that the Afrikanerbond was careful not to step on the church's toes. (It should, however, be noted that the Afrikanerbond contributed to the creation of Afrikaans culture and language in other important ways.) Another interesting fact is that both main figures in the translation process of the 1933 translation – JD du Toit (Totius) and JD Kestell – were not members of the Bond at that stage, and thus had no direct connection with the Bond or influence on it.

The South African Academy of Science and Art, however, did play an important role in the translation of the Bible. In 1923 the Academy showed their support for the initiative by appointing two language advisors to assist the permanent translators. In 1925, the Academy noticed that there was a lack of coordination between the advisors, and thus uniformity in the translation was lacking. The advisors were then encouraged to work together. In 1926, during a conference held in Bloemfontein, uniformity between the advisors was again encouraged. At the annual meeting held in September 1927, the Academy decided to support the initiative financially, so they paid the travelling costs of the advisors, as well as a certain fee for every person for the duration of the work (Nienaber 1934:153-154,157,159,161).

### *The shaping of political identities*

The first two complete official translations of the Bible in Afrikaans coincided with significant periods of change in South Africa. The first translation of 1933 (and its revision in 1953) was produced during the period of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa. The second translation (*Nuwe Afrikaanse vertaling* [New Afrikaans translation]), published in 1983, was produced during the period leading up to the first democratic government in South Africa.

Furthermore, each of these translations was connected to an epistemological tradition. These two traditions are referred to as naive realism and critical realism (Deist 1994:63) and both had been present in the Dutch Reformed Church since 1920. Naive realism, or Calvinism, as represented in conservative biblical theology, has its origin in the fundamentalist theology taught at the Free University of Amsterdam and at Princeton. Critical realism represents a more sophisticated approach, which entails that theology should be studied as a science. Although both of these traditions were represented among the translators of the first two complete Afrikaans Bible translations, in the 1933 translation the predominant view among translators was naive realism, whereas in the 1983 translation critical realism was predominant. For each translation, the predominant epistemological view both influenced the translation and, conversely, the translation was used by proponents of the view to further their religious and political agendas (see further the later discussion on apartheid and the translations below).

### **Translation frame of the 1933 translation**

In this section the translation method that was utilised in the 1933 translation will be situated within the larger framework of the discipline of translation studies up until the first half of the previous century. Bible translation was predominantly characterised by equivalence, especially word-for-word equivalence. This entailed that every word in the source text should be carefully transmitted into the target text. The following translations are examples of this type of translation method: the King James Version, the American Standard Version, the Dutch Authorised Version and the 1933/53 Afrikaans Bible translation. The 1933 translation was a literal translation of the original source texts. The aim of this translation, as stated by Nienaber (1934), was to aid the reader in his or her comprehension of the text by means of a precise translation of every Hebrew word into Afrikaans. The translators also

deemed it necessary to retain the aesthetic value, sentiment, emotion and rhythm of the Hebrew words in the Afrikaans translation. This was their *skopos*, although they did not describe their aims within the conceptual framework of *skopos* theory, which had not yet been developed at that time.

Indeed, the 1933 translation of the Bible into Afrikaans took place during the pre-theoretical period of translation studies, and the nature of the translation reflects this context. The planning of the Afrikaans translation was also impacted by the possibility of revising or re-translating the Dutch Authorised Version. The Dutch Authorised Version of 1637 had fallen into disuse in the Netherlands, and thus the possibility of a new or revised version was being contemplated there. Important studies exploring these issues were undertaken in the Netherlands by FW Grosheide (1916), who promoted a word-for-word translation strategy. His studies were read by Totius and summarised in popular church publications; they were thus highly influential in the shaping of the Afrikaans Bible translation project.

During the second half of the previous century this emphasis on word-for-word translation shifted as translation studies was founded as a new discipline and was established at various universities. Eugene Nida (1960; 1964; 1972), one of the pioneers of translation studies as a scientific discipline, opted for a sense-for-sense method of translation, thus translating the meaning of sentences rather than focusing only on the meanings of words. For Nida the ideal translation was achieved when a target text had the same effect on the target audience as the source text had on the source audience. Since 1970 most of the new Bible translations were target-text and meaning-oriented translations. The following translations are examples of this new translation model: *The good news Bible*, and its German (*Der gute Nachricht*) and Dutch counterparts (*De grootnieuws Bijbel*). The 1983 Afrikaans Bible translation was also fashioned after Nida's dynamic-equivalent approach to translation.

Bible translations can be divided into three categories, namely auxiliary translations, authoritative translations and corrective translations (Swanepoel 1987:10-24). Usually there is only one authoritative translation with an increasing number of corrective translations. The various Afrikaans Bible translations can also be divided into these three categories. Auxiliary translations are intended to guide readers when the existing translation no longer functions effectively in the target culture. Examples of auxiliary translations are the following: CP Hoogenhout's tale of Joseph in Afrikaans titled *Die geskiedenis van Josef voor Afrikaanse kinders en huisvrouens, in hulle eiige taal geskrywe deur een vriend* (The history of Joseph in Afrikaans, prepared for children and housewives in their own language by a friend), and *Bybelgeskiedenis vir ons volk* (The history of the Bible for our nation) (Wegener 1985:223-224). SJ du Toit's translations, as well as the 1922 translation, also form part of the category of auxiliary translations, because their intention was not to replace the Dutch Authorised Version. An authoritative translation replaces the previous translations, or even the source text. An example is the 1933 Afrikaans Bible translation. Corrective translations are critical evaluations of existing, accepted authoritative translations. The 1953 revision of the 1933 translation can, for example, be categorised as a corrective translation; similarly the 1983 translation is a corrective translation in the sense that it corrects translation principles. In addition, all translations produced after the 1983 translation of the Bible in Afrikaans function as corrective translations. These translations are aimed at individuals with special reading needs. The *Afrikaanse Bybel vir dowes* (The Afrikaans Bible for the deaf) is a relevant example.

The word-for-word strategy of translation as followed in the 1933 translation did not indemnify it against the dominant ideologies of the target Afrikaner culture. A relevant example is the 1933 translation's rendering of the Hebrew word *mamzer*, which appears only twice in the Old Testament and whose meaning in Hebrew is unclear. The 1933 translation incorrectly translates this word in every instance as *baster* (bastard), based on the translation "bastard" in the King James Version. However, *baster* in Afrikaans refers to a child parented by individuals of different races. For example, Deuteronomy 23:2 states that no *mamzer* may enter the congregation, which the 1933 translation translates as *baster*. The 1983 translation, which follows a sense-for-sense translation strategy, translates instead "n persoon wat gebore is uit ontoelaatbare geslagsgemeenskap" (a person born of unlawful sexual relations) and provides a footnote to Leviticus 18:6-20, which has a list of illegitimate sexual relations that are not based on race.

The translators of the 1933 translation intended to follow closely the Dutch Authorised translation, because they feared that their translation would not be accepted if they diverged from it. They thus incorporated the religious terms found in the Dutch Authorised Version into their Afrikaans translation, even though these terms were not in general use in Dutch or Afrikaans outside of religious settings. The following terms fall in this category: *welgeluksalig* (blessed), *geregtigheid van God* (God's justice) and *goedertierenheid* (loving kindness). However, these terms were not used in the 1983 Afrikaans translation, which was intended as a modern language version.

## Organisational frame: source text, translation team and translation process

### *Source text*

Translators generally strive towards invisibility so that the translated text will be accepted as if it is an original text and the same is true within the tradition of the various Afrikaans Bible translations. For example, SJ du Toit tried to achieve invisibility in his translation by writing Afrikaans words as they were pronounced. In the 1922 Afrikaans Bible translation, the translators sought invisibility by imitating the style of the Dutch Authorised Version. The 1933 translators strove towards invisibility by using the *Textus Receptus* as the source text for the New Testament. Although the translators had access to other important critical editions of the New Testament, including those of Westcott and Hort as well as Nestle, they chose to use the *Textus Receptus* because they believed that it was indeed the source text of the Dutch Authorised Version, although in fact it was not (Nienaber 1934:117). This decision was highly contentious. Prof Keet, a translator of the 1933 translation and professor in theology at Stellenbosch University, maintained the point of view that the source text used for the 1933 translation contributed to the enthusiastic acceptance of the translation. In contrast CF Kies was of the opinion that use of the *Textus Receptus* as the source text for the 1933 translation represented one of its major flaws.

Unlike the translators of the New Testament, the Old Testament translators had no choice on which Hebrew text to use as their source text. They used the only Hebrew text available at that time – the second edition of Rudolf Kittel's *Biblia Hebraica*. This edition was based on Jacob Chayyim's two Rabbinic Bibles that were published in 1524-1525 in Venice by Daniël Bomberg.

### *The translation team*

Generally the 1933 translation is attributed to JD du Toit (Totius). In actuality, however, there was a whole translating team consisting of the following: the Bible translation committee, a secretary, first-translators, end-translators, revisers and language advisors.

It was the Free State Synod which first decided to translate the Bible into Afrikaans and they were also responsible for selecting the individuals who were to form part of the translation committee. However, there was a shortage of translators with sufficient skills. The following translators were selected: Prof JD du Toit (Totius), Prof BB Keet and Dr TB Muller (Old Testament) and Prof F Postma, Prof GBA Gerdener and Rev NJ van der Merwe (New Testament). Later on adjustments were made to this panel (Van der Watt 1987:316-317). Information about the first-translators is rare because Nienaber (1934), the most prominent source of information about the Afrikaans translation, focused mainly on the end-translators, who were only appointed in 1923. This historical lacuna should be researched further.

In July 1923 the committee appointed two end-translators (translators who were responsible for the final wording and editing) who were competent theologians and could commit themselves to the project full-time. The two end-translators were Prof JD du Toit and Prof BB Keet. Because of his appointment to the translation committee, Totius was allowed to devote his attention to the 1933 translation. But Prof Keet was not able to distance himself completely from his responsibilities at Stellenbosch's theological seminary. At the end of 1923 Dr JD Kestell, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Free State, was appointed as an end-translator (Smit 1970:229; Oberholzer 1958:50). He was also granted permission from the counsel of Grey University College (now the University of the Free State) to commit himself to the project full-time. At the age of 73, Dr Kestell thus retired and committed himself entirely to the translation project. His input, especially in the translation of the New Testament, has sometimes been wrongly downplayed (Nienaber 1946; Van Schoor 1992).

Temporary end-translators were also employed later: HCM Fourie (Reformed Church) and Prof EE van Rooyen (Dutch Reformed Church). They assisted both Dr Du Toit with the Old Testament translation and Dr Keet, who assisted Dr Kestell with the translation of the New Testament. Beginning in 1926 these five individuals worked on the translation project, which they would eventually complete (Smit 1970:229; Oberholzer 1958:52). Prof LJ du Plessis, from Potchefstroom, acted as the secretary of the end-translators (Oberholzer 1958:52).

Meanwhile revisers were appointed, but at that stage they did not contribute much to the project. Only at a later stage were they able to comment on the translated text. During a committee meeting held on 16 June 1925 in Bloemfontein, the list of revisers was considered yet again (Oberholzer 1958:52); it seems that there were 24 revisers in total. Prof Van Gelderen from the Free University in Amsterdam also acted as a reviser for a period of time. Some of the revisers, however, could not fulfil their duties due to their responsibilities towards their congregations, whereas others took their

translation responsibilities more seriously. Interestingly, the revisers never met to discuss the translation, but rather acted individually in sending their comments to the translators. The final decisions concerning the wording of the translation thus remained with the translators (Nienaber 1934:144).

During this period the translators were also assisted by language advisors, including Prof DF Malherbe, SPE Boshoff, JJ Smith and TH le Roux. Their influence during the first years of the project cannot be determined, because no records of their work remain (Nienaber 1934:153-154,157,159,161).

The composition of the translation team as a whole was remarkably uniform and consisted only of white males. The end-translator team consisted only of professors from the Dutch Reformed Church, the Reformed Church and the Hervormde Church.

### *The translation process*

The history of the Afrikaans Bible translation can be divided into three periods. The first period stretches from Arnoldus Pannevis's letter on the call for a Bible translation in Afrikaans written to the Dutch newspaper *De Zuid-Afrikaan* on 7 September 1872 (Oberholzer 1958:21) and ends with the death of SJ du Toit in 1911 (Nienaber 1934:15). The second period starts with Dr BB Keet's lecture of 1914 before the Afrikaans language union and ends with the decision of the Synod of the Free State on 16 May 1916 to sponsor the translation (Nienaber 1934:43-50). The third period started on 7 August 1924, after the 1922 trial translation (published as the *Vier Evangelie en Psalme*) was criticised, and ends when the decision to use the Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) source texts for the translation rather than the Dutch Authorised translation (Nienaber 1934:108).

Nienaber (1946:85; 1934:199-120) notes that the two end-translators had to come up with a working strategy to guide them in the translation process. Prof Du Toit translated the Old Testament, while Prof Kestell translated the New Testament. These two translators decided to work individually, and then to send their translated texts to each other. They also met together from time to time.

Prof Kestell described how he worked on the translation in a letter written to Prof Du Toit. He stated that he was trying to rid himself of all other material and to focus solely on the Greek text. Once he was well acquainted with the text he would then focus on the translation process. He was translating approximately four pages and then comparing his translation to the text of the Dutch Authorised translation. He was also making use of other sources, such as dictionaries, grammars and other established translations including the Revised Version (of the King James Version), Moffat, Weymouth, the Leyden translation, etc. (Nienaber 1934:120-121). The translation was also compared to the work of the first-translators.

It was important that the new translation should mimic the Dutch Authorised Version, because it was regarded as an authoritative translation, and because its words and sounds were known to the readers of the new translation. As a result, the translators adhered closely to the Dutch Authorised Version with respect to the composition of sentences and the choice of words. For example, the word *versoendeksel* (mercy seat) from the Dutch Authorised Version was maintained in the 1933 translation (see also above). Other Dutch words were simplified in the Afrikaans translation: for example, *heerschappy voeren* (reign over) was simplified to *heers* (reign) in the translation of Genesis 1:28. Some of the words used in the Dutch Authorised Version, however, could not be used in the Afrikaans translation at all, because they were archaic, obscure or foreign. An example of such a word is *afgrond* (abyss) in Genesis 1:2; other examples include some animal and plant names, whose meanings were not clear to the translators. At times it was necessary to translate certain passages after additional research, and not depend as much on the text of the Authorised Version. The translators also had to decide whether their translation choices would be understood by readers, or if they would only be understood by scholars who were acquainted with these words.

Each translator submitted his handwritten work to the secretary, who in turn typed the manuscript. (This method was similar to the one used for the translation process of the Dutch Authorised Version.) The typed manuscripts were then read and adjusted by the translators, and then typed again. A copy of the manuscripts was also provided to the language advisors and the revisers, who in turn had to comment on the text. But decisions about which comments to accept and which to reject were left to the discretion of the translators. After the whole Bible was translated and typed, it was sent to the editors. The translators of both the Old and New Testament had to compare each other's work to the Hebrew and Greek source text. Then all the translators met together to decide on a joint reading. The last stage involved sending the manuscript back to the assembly of translators, where the translation was finalised.

Immediately after the publication of the translation in 1933, it was decided that the end-translators should continue to revise and improve the translation. This period ended in 1953, and can be considered the fourth stage in the translation process. This work was done by Prof Du Toit and Prof Keet. The completely revised translation was published in August 1953. The revision was not a radically altered version of the 1933 translation, but some changes were made in terms of the choices of words. These changes were made to further distinguish the Afrikaans translation from the Dutch Authorised Version.

Afterwards a new period in Bible translation dawned. During a seminar on Bible translation in 1967 in Pretoria where Eugene Nida was the plenary speaker, the decision was made to produce a new translation rather than to continue perpetually revising the 1933 text. This decision was influenced by the recommendation of Eugene Nida. The final result was a common language translation, *Die nuwe vertaling*, which was published in 1983.

### **Linguistic frame and sociocultural impact of the 1933 translation**

The year 1933 was a momentous one in the history of South Africa. At the end of 1932, the country's finances were taken off the gold standard. In addition, 1933 was also characterised by the amalgamation of the two main South African political parties, and the end of one of the most severe droughts in South African history. In light of this, though, the appearance of the 1933 Afrikaans Bible translation is still regarded as the most significant event of that year (Smit 1970:65). According to Rev HPM Steyn, the Afrikaans Bible was officially presented to each congregation during a Bible festival held on 27 August 1933. The central Bible festival, held in Bloemfontein at the Marksaal, was attended by 5 000 people (Smit 1970:66-67). The translation of the Bible in Afrikaans had a sustained impact on the development, enrichment and the promotion of Afrikaans as a national language (see Ponelis 2002; Steyn 2009).

Most importantly for the later history of South Africa, the 1933 Bible was used to justify the apartheid movement. This claim is substantiated by examining the proof texts from the 1933 translation that were used for the "separate development" of the various races of South Africa as set forth in the 1974 document "Race, people and nation" (see Naudé 2005 for a list of examples). A relevant example of this is the translation of Genesis 11:1, where the building of the Tower of Babel is described. A direct translation of the Hebrew in Afrikaans would read as follows: "Die hele aarde het een taal en een stel woorde gehad" (The whole earth had one language and one set of words). The 1933 translation, however, employed a translation strategy of intensification and explication. It reads: "En die hele aarde het dieselfde taal gehad en een en dieselfde woorde" (And the whole earth had the same language and one and the same words). The later 1983 translation simplified the text to read: "Die hele wêreld het net een taal gepraat" (The whole world spoke only one language). The readers of the 1933 translation read that differentiation was part of God's intention in the world, and thus the apartheid movement was justified. In earlier documents justifying apartheid, the concept of diversity also gained support, because of the use of the words "volgens hulle eie soort" (according to their own kind) (Genesis 1:11) in the 1933 translation. The translation was understood to mean that each race should be separated "according to their own kind".

### **Conclusion**

The point of departure of this article was the fact that when a translation is accepted as a translation it implies a text of a high standard, even though a translation can never be an exact replica of the source text. Narrative frame theory, a recent development within translation studies, was used as the theoretical framework for describing and explaining the 1933 translation of the Bible into Afrikaans. The sociocultural framework, the translation framework, the organisational framework and the linguistic framework were analysed.

The discussion of the sociocultural framework indicated that the 1933 translation was produced during the Afrikaner period (1924-1990). During this period a form of nationalism was established that in turn promoted the idea of a Bible translation. Although the readers of the Dutch Authorised Version no longer had a sound knowledge of the Dutch language, Afrikaans had previously not been accepted as a cultural language in South Africa. The main motivation for the translation of the Bible in Afrikaans was to promote the official position of Afrikaans. The first translation (1933) and its revision (1953) (*Ou Afrikaanse vertaling*) were produced during the boom of Afrikaner nationalism. Furthermore, proof texts from the 1933 translation were used in official documents in order to justify the apartheid movement. The translation also coincided with two epistemological traditions that had

been identifiable in the Dutch Reformed Church since 1920, namely naive realism and critical realism. The translators of the first complete Afrikaans Bible represented both of these traditions.

In terms of translation, the 1933 translation was produced during the pre-theoretical period in translation studies as a discipline. During this period formal equivalence on the word level was the translation strategy of the translators. The words used in the translation of the 1933 translation were closely compared to those of the Dutch Authorised Version, which had achieved a high status as an authoritative and prestige text.

Analysis of the organisational frame revealed that the simplistic view that attributes the entire translation to JD du Toit (Totius) is misleading. Instead, there was a whole translating team, consisting of the following: a Bible translation committee, secretary, pre-translators, post-translators, revisers and language advisors. In addition, JD Kestell's contribution to the 1933 translation, especially in the translation of the New Testament, has often been downplayed.

In terms of the linguistic frame, the translators strove towards invisibility (an example is the use of the *Textus Receptus* as source text for the New Testament), so that the translation would not be regarded as a new translation, and in turn be rejected by its readers. In this respect, they were highly successful – the translation was thoroughly accepted and had a significant impact on the development, enrichment and promotion of Afrikaans as a national language, as well as on the shaping of South African society in the 20th century.

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