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

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

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

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[1]This essay was originally presented to a Plenary Session at the Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Wheaton, IL, in November 1988 and has been updated for incorporation into this issue of *The Master's Seminary Journal*. A related essay, "Bible Translations: The Link Between Exegesis and Expository Preaching," appeared in the Spring 1990 issue of *The Master's Seminary Journal*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[6]Ibid.

This concept of hermeneutics is quite different from that tradi-tionally assi
to the word. Normally it is defined as "the science of interpretation."[7] *Web*
New Collegiate Dictionary defines hermeneu-tics as "the study of the methodolo
principles of interpretation."[8] *Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary Unabr*
makes herme-neutics synonymous with exegesis.[9] Terry more precisely notes
hermeneutics constitutes the principles of interpretation that are applie
exegesis.[10]   Yet Nida emphatically distinguishes between exegesis
hermeneutics, and says they are two distinct components of the larger catego
interpretation.[11]

Admittedly the connotation of "hermeneutics" has shifted in recent tin
creating widespread confusion. Yet Nida appears to be in disharmony
everyone in his definition. He has equated hermeneutics with what
traditionally been called "application," which is based on the one co
interpretation of the original writing,[13] and in so doing, has represente
extreme position that is unacceptable because it represents an abnormal sen
the word. So his strict dissociation of hermeneutics and translation canno
taken seriously.

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

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

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

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

[10]Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 19.

[11]Nida and Reyburn, *Meaning* 30. See also de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 40, whe
authors write, "This issue of the communicative role of the Bible highlights an important disti
which may be made between exegesis and hermeneutics, although some writers use these
almost indistinguishably."

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

[13]Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 600.

[14]Ramm, *Hermeneutics* 6.

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE
AND TRADITIONAL HERMENEUTICS

The Overlapping of Dynamic Equivalence and Exegesis

One of the striking features of dynamic equivalence is its embracing w[ithin] its methodology of what has been known traditionally as biblical exege[sis]. Inclusion of exegetical procedures is necessitated by the first of three steps [that] dynamic-equivalence theory recommends. The three steps are reduction o[f the] source text to its structurally simplest and most semantically evident ker[nel,] transference of the meaning from the source language to the receptor languag[e at] a structurally simple level, and generation of the stylistically and semant[ically] equivalent expression in the receptor language.[15]

The first of the three steps consists of two parts, analysis of the source te[xt in] terms of grammatical relationships and analysis of it in terms of the meanin[g of] the words and combinations of words.[16] A common way to illustrate gramm[atical] analysis is with uses of the Greek genitive case and the corresponding En[glish] construction of two nouns or pronouns connected by "of."[17] Those familiar [with] the earliest stages of NT Greek study recognize quickly that an analysis o[f the] various uses of the Greek genitive case is a standard part of preparation for bi[blical] exegesis. Yet there is a strange reticence by those who espouse D-E methodo[logy] to recognize that this type of study has been underway for a long time.[18]

The 1986 work by de Waard and Nida does refer to standard too[ls of] lexicography, but it casts them in a negative light.   Traditional bilin[gual] dictionaries are labeled as deficient because they depend almost entirel[y]

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

[16]E. A. Nida and C. R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969) 3[3-34].
[17]Nida, *Toward a Science* 207-208, 229; Nida and Taber, *The Theory* 35-37. "Field of blood" [(Acts] 1:19) and "God of peace" (Phil 4:9) are two among the suggested examples of ambiguity (Nida [227]. For the former Nida suggests two possible interpretations, "field where blood was spille[d (or] "shed") or "field that reminded people of blood." For the latter he rejects "a peaceful God" [as an] option, and chooses "God who gives peace" or "God who causes peace."

[18]The sole use of "exegesis" in the index of Nida's *Toward a Science of Translating* is in a p[assing] reference to the field in his historical survey of translations in the western world (Nida, *To[ward a] Science* 28).   The only place where Nida and Taber use "exegesis" in their *Theory and Prac[tice of] Translation*, according to their index, is as a part of a sample set of principles prepared for [those] making a "Southern Bantu" translation, and this mention is only in passing (Nida and Tabe[r, *The] Theory* 182).   The standard grammars for NT Greek are never alluded to in the above works, n[or are] they listed in their bibliographies.

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

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

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

Dynamic Equivalence and Ambiguous Passages

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

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

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

[20]Ibid., 161-62.

[21]Further evidence of the inclusion of hermeneutics in the D-E methodology is seen in wha
authors have written about such things as how to handle the synonyms gapv (*agapa*, "I love") a
(*phile*, "I love") in John 21:15-19 (de Waard and Nida, *From One Language* 93), the treatm
anacolutha (ibid., 105), the meaning of katalambnv (*katalamban*, "I apprehend") in John 1:5
107), and the meaning of martyra 1Ihso (*martyria Isou*, "the testimony of Jesus") in Revelati
(ibid., 127). All these belong properly in the realm of exegesis. As a matter of fact, de Waar
Nida in essence acknowledge the essential presence of the science of interpretation in D-E whe
write, "The primary exegetical perspective of a translator is `what did the text mean to the p
who were the original receptors?'" (ibid., 177).

Glassman gives a similar but simpler explanation of the step of analysis, using srj
"flesh") with its varying NT meanings as one of his examples of the interpretive decisions
must be made by a D-E translator (Glassman, *Trans-lation Debate* 59-60).

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

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

principle approvingly: "To imitate the obscurity or ambiguity of the origina[l] fault and it is still a greater one to give more than one meaning."[24]   To fo[llow] through with this perspective, he later uses the Greek genitive-case form wit[h] corresponding use of the English preposition "of" to illustrate how to elim[inate] ambiguities.[25] "Cup of the Lord" (1 Cor 10:21) is rendered "the cup by whic[h we] remember the Lord," "wisdom of words" (1 Cor 1:17) is taken to be "well arra[nged] words," and "sons of wrath" (Eph 2:3) becomes "those with whom God is angr[y]." In each case the obscurity in meaning disappears through a gramm[atical] restructuring.[27]

More recently, de Waard and Nida have expressed the same perspe[ctive] regarding ambiguous passages: "It is unfair to the original writer and t[o the] receptors to reproduce as ambiguities all those passages which may be interp[reted] in more than one way."[28] They add that the translator should place in the tex[t the] best attested interpretation and provide in marginal notes the approp[riate] alternatives.[29]

Usually the case for non-ambiguity is buttressed by references to [the] inadequacies of formal-equivalence translations. Examples of ambiguous [and] allegedly misleading formal-equivalence translations have been multiplied. [The] volume of examples adduced have won the case for D-E in the minds of so[me.] As persuasive as these lists are, however, superficiality and carelessness [have] marked the choices of at least some of the illustrations. The scope of our discu[ssion] permits citation of only one widely used passage to illustrate this. In Psal[m 1] Glassman cites the description of the "blessed man" who in formal-equiva[lence] translations does "not stand in the way of sinners." He then criticizes the rend[ering] in these words: "Nowadays to stand in the way of something or someone mea[ns]

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

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

[26]Ibid.

[27]Wonderly in 1968 noted the rarity of an expression that is ambiguous when its total con[text is] taken into account (Wonderly, *Bible Translations* 162). He conversely observed that a comp[letely] "unambiguous" expression is also rare (ibid.). In light of this he saw the elimination of all po[ssible] ambiguities as undesirable. Yet, for the sake of the uneducated, he advised the transla[tor "to] eliminate them or reduce to a minimum the probability of their being misunder-stood" (ibid., 1[63]).

Determination to eliminate ambiguities has seemingly grown stronger with the pass[ing of] time. In 1981 Nida and Reyburn saw attempts to reproduce ambiguities in a translation as un[fair to] the original author and unfair to the untrained reader (Nida and Reyburn, *Meaning* 7-8; ambig[uities] referred to are, of course, those resulting from the scholars' lack of understanding, not inten[tional] ambiguities intended by an author; see also Jean-Claude Margot, "Should a Translation of the [Bible] Be Ambiguous," *BT* 32/4 [Oct 1981] 406-413). They suggested that the translator's goal shoul[d be to] translate so as to prevent misunderstanding of what the original receptors understood (ibid., 2[9]).

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

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

[29]Ibid.

[30]E.g. Carson, "The Limits" 1.

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

Unfortunately the reaction of Glassman and others against a fo
equivalence rendering of Psalm 1:1 is characteristic of other ill-advised conclu
by D-E advocates. This is surprising, for some of these are leading linguists w
a part of their methodology advocate a careful respect for the referential mean
of words and expressions as they appear in dictionary resources.[33]   Yet
disregard their own advice. For example, de Waard and Nida object to fo
equivalence renderings of Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not w
by stating flatly, "*want* no longer means `to lack' but rather `to desire.'"[3]
contrast, contemporary dictionaries give the intransitive verb "want" a
meaning of "lack" or "have a need,"[35] exactly what the psalmist intended to s
Rather than correcting the formal-equivalence translators, the linguistic speci
should have acknowledged the legitimacy of their word choice. They would
have been more credible if they had prefaced their critical remark with "i
sphere of knowledge" or "according to our judgment," but to say wi
qualification "*want* no longer means `to lack'" raises questions about their judg
in general.

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

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

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

[33]Nida, *Toward a Science* 70.

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

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

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

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

DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE
AND CONTEMPORARY HERMENEUTICS

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

Recent Trends in Hermeneutics

One of the recent foci in hermeneutical discussions is the establishmen[t of a] starting point for interpretation. Special attention to this aspect of interpret[ation] furnishes a convenient approach to comparing D-E with contempo[rary] hermeneutics.

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

Eitel portrays two broad types of hermeneutical controls, a Scrip[ture-] dominant one and a context-dominant one.[39] These two are a convenient w[ay to] divide the wide assortment of starting points that have been proposed. One g[roup] belongs to the past and focuses on elements in the original settings of va[rious] portions of Scripture, and the other belongs to the present with elements o[f the] contemporary world setting the tone for interpretation.

Thiselton insists that the starting point must be something in the pr[esent] situation of the interpreter.[40] The interpreter addresses his initial questions t[o the] text and is personally interpreted by the response of the text, thus beginnin[g]

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[37]J. W. Scott, "Dynamic Equivalence and Some Theological Problems in the *NIV*," *WTJ* 4[8:2 Fall] 1986) 355, points out the superiority of the KJV and NASB renderings of Acts 16:31 to that [of the] NIV, in this regard. Translators with limited understanding of the text, he notes, will more pr[obably] convey the original meaning more accurately and more completely than those of a free o[r D-E] translation (see also p. 351). E. L. Miller, "The *New International Version* on the Prologue of the [Gospel]," *HTR* 72/3-4 (July-Oct 1979) 309, criticizes the NIV for not retaining the ambiguity of the Greek [in its] handling of John 1:9, saying that the translators had usurped the reader's right to an ac[curate] rendering of the text. J. C. Jeske, "Faculty Review of the Revised *NIV*," *Wisconsin Lutheran Qu[arterly]* 85/2 (Spring 1988) 106, cites the same version for its failure to retain the ambiguity of the Gree[k text] in Heb 9:14. Yet he also commends the NIV for retaining ambiguity in its handling of Luke [2:14] (105). A. H. Nichols (in "Explicitness in Translation and the Westernization of Scripture," *Re[formed] Theological Review* 3 [Sept-Dec 1988] 78-88) calls this focus of D-E "explicitness" and pinpoin[ts the] difficulties it creates in translation.

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

[39]K. E. Eitel, "Contextualization: Contrasting African Voices," *Criswell Theological Revi[ew]* (Spring 1988) 324.

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

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

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

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

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

[41]Ibid., 316.

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

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

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

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ferguson, *Biblical Hermeneutics* 177.

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

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

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

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

Trends in Translation

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

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

[51]Nida, *Toward a Science* 165.

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

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

[54]Ibid.

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

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

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

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

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

[56]Nida, *Toward a Science* 22, 171.

[57]Ibid., 24.

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

[59]Nida, *Toward a Science* 184.

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

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

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

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

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

Other Similarities Between Contemporary Hermeneutics
    and Dynamic Equivalence

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

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[62]Ibid., 8.

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

[64]Gill, "Mediated Meaning" 40.

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

[66]Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* 281.

[67]Ibid., 291.

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

[69]See above p. 15.

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

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

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

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

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

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

[73]See above pp. 159, 163.

[74]Nida, *Toward a Science* 184.

[75]Because of the nature of the limitations observed in producing the NIV, Scott refers
methodology as "moderate `dynamic equivalence'" (Scott, *Dynamic Equivalence* 351). J. P. l
"The New International Version," *ResQ* 24/1 (1981) 6, a member of the NIV translation
describes the NIV as a compromise between the traditional and the innovative, as sometimes
and sometimes dynamically equivalent. Yet the purpose of the NIV as stated in its preface, t
representing the meaning rather than producing a word-for-word translation, places this v
squarely in the category of D-E ("Preface," *The New International Version Study Bible* [Grand Ra

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

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

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

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

(4) In 1980 Fee objected to the NIV's rendering of gynaikw ptesuai (*gyn[...]
haptesthai*, "[good] for a woman not to touch") by "marry" in 1 Cor 7:1.[79]

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

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

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

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

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

[78]David P. Scaer, "The New International Version`Nothing New," *CTQ* 43/1 (June 1979) 24[...]
committee has not yet changed this rendering. Nor have they chosen to change the words "ca[...]
life" in Rev 20:4. Scaer objected to these words because of their millennialistic implications.

[79]G. D. Fee, "I Corinthians 7:1 in the NIV," *JETS* 23/4 (1980), 307-314. The committee has n[...]
incorporated his suggested literal rendering of "touch a woman," but has left the text as it wa[...]
an added alternative in the margin which reads "have sexual relations with a woman." In 19[...]
has gone further and expressed hesitation about D-E in general and the NIV in particular beca[...]
found "far too many absolutely wrong exegetical choices . . . locked into the biblical text [...]
reader's only option" ("Reflections on Commentary Writing," *TToday* 46/4 [Jan 1990] 388).

[80]Scott, "Dynamic Equivalence" 353-358.

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

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

This dissatisfaction stems ultimately from the large subjective elemen[...] is inherent in D-E. Here then is another area of kinship with contempo[...] hermeneutics. Continuing revision committees are at work on the NIV and si[...] versions to try to weed out unsatisfac-tory renderings. The general "tighte[...] trend observable in the recommendations of these committees[85] is an im[...] recognition of the problems raised by subjectivity. The task is endless becau[...] the translation philosophy of D-E translations.

A similarity in theological implications.   Another relationship bet[...] contemporary hermeneutics and D-E in translation may be detected i[...] theological implications of each. Some of us have shied away from this subje[...] fear of saying too much or of being misunderstood. Yet something of this n[...] must be discussed.

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

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

   [82]Ibid.

   [83]Scaer, "The New International Version" 243.

   [84]Miller, "The *New International Version*" 310; Scott, "Dynamic Equivalence" 361. Kohlenb[...] *Words* 66-67, recognizes the problem of the excessive-commentary element in versions such [...] Amplified Bible, the Living Bible, and Wuest's Expanded Translation, but he is apparently obl[...] to the presence of the same in the NIV. Thomas A. Boogaart criticizes the NIV's sacrific[...] faithfulness to the original Hebrew and Greek in the interest of harmonizing different t[...] traditions within Scripture and of seeking agreement with various scientific theories ("The[...] International Version: What Price Harmony?" *Reformed Review* 43/3 [Spring 1990] 189-203).

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

   [86]Nida, *Toward a Science* 27.

   [87]Ibid.

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

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

The presence of such a motive can be seen in the reactionary nature of [some] of the early-twentieth-century free translations. Moffatt in the preface of his [1913] translation of the NT associates his freedom in translation methodology with b[eing] "freed from the influence of the theory of verbal inspiration."[91] Phillips justifi[es his] approach in a similar way in the preface to one of his paraphrases: "Most pe[ople], however great their reverence for the New Testament may be, do not hold a w[ord]-by-word theory of inspiration. . . ."[92]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[93]Nida and Taber, *The Theory* 7.

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

While opposition by D-E to an evangelical view of inspiration may n
viewed as explicit, there are implications and overtones that raise se
questions. Certainly no doubt can be entertained about the clear evangelical s
of some individuals that have participated in D-E efforts. The question here re
to the foundational philoso-phy behind D-E.

The same type of questions exists in regard to the hermeneutical empl
of contextualization. For example, the position of Charles Kraft regarding
relative nature of all systematic theology[96] calls into question the tradit
doctrine of inspiration with its associated grammatico-historical metho
interpretation.[97]   Herein lies another similarity of D-E to contempo
hermeneutics.

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

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

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

[95]Ibid., 4.

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

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

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

[99]Nida and Reyburn, *Meaning* 26-27.

[100]Ibid.

QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

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

A Linguistic Question

Nida and other linguistic authorities are quite specific in telling transl[ators] to abide by the referential meanings of words, meanings they identify with [those] found in standard dictionaries.[101]   In *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionar[y]* relevant definition of the word "translation" is, "an act, process, or instan[ce of] translating: as **a**: a rendering from one language into another; *also* the produ[ct of] such a rendering."[102]   There is little doubt that, in the minds of most people [who] use the English language, the term "translation" used in a cross-cultural conne[ction] suggests the simple idea of changing from one language into another. Yet t[his is] only one-third of the process of dynamic equivalence, the step that is c[alled] "transfer."[103] The question is then, "Is it proper linguistic practice to use the [word] `translation' to describe the product of a D-E exercise?"[104]

More recently, de Waard and Nida use "associative meaning" in li[eu of] "referential meaning" to describe lexical definitions.[105]   They point out[, for] example, the hesitancy of most translations to use "Yahweh" because in the m[inds] of many Christians, it has become associated with a modernistic attitude to[ward] the Bible and God.[106]

Should not the same precision be shown in use of the word "translati[on"?] The use of "translation" to include implementation of all the principl[es of] hermeneutics and exegesis reflects an insensitivity to the associative meani[ng of] that word in the minds of most English-speaking people. Perhaps "commenta[ry" is] too strong a word to describe a D-E product, but it seems that something su[ch as] "cultural translation"[107] or "interpretive translation" would be more in kee[ping] with principles espoused by linguistic authorities.

An Ethical Question

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

Graves has observed that every translation is a lie in the sense that ther[e is]

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[101]Nida, *Toward a Science* 70.

[102]*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1988) 125[6].

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

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

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

[106]Ibid., 142.

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

no identical equivalents between languages.[108]   This problem is alleviated b
understanding in the minds of most that translation is done by means of
equivalents rather than exact equivalents.[109]   But if a translator goes one
further and intentionally incorporates his personal interpretations when he c
have left many passages with the same ambiguity as the original, has he done
by those who will use his translation?

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

A Practical Question

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

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

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

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

[109]Grossman, *The Translation Debate* 75.

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