

repetition of the imperatives should be present in the translation to communicate the theological preoccupation and aim of the writer.

For this text I propose the following translation:

So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, blessed them and said, 'Have many children, increase your descendants, fill the earth and have dominion over it. You are in charge of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals.

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THE FUNCTION OF DISCOURSE IN A SOCIOSEMIOTIC THEORY OF TRANSLATION ILLUSTRATED BY THE TRANSLATION OF *zēloute* IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12.31

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Translation is essentially a matter of meaning—even in the case of a formal translation. In fact, adherents of formal correspondence in translation are generally of the opinion that literalness has everything to do with 'correct' meaning. In the 1985 edition of the *Amsterdamse Cahiers*,¹ supporters of concordant translation procedures emphasize their claim that their translation theory accounts best for the real meaning of a text. Naturally, all supporters of functional equivalence translation emphasize that their objective is to render meaning. Consequently, to translate *zēloute* in 1 Cor 12.31 is to say what it means. This seems fairly obvious in that one may analyse the term *zēloute* as a graphic sign representing a Greek verb having a lexical meaning as well as additional semantic signification based on the grammatical mood of *zēloute*, namely, indicative or imperative.

As to the lexical meaning, it is surely not merely looking up *zēloō* in a dictionary, since English terms such as 'desire, covet, be zealous, be earnest, etc.', which are regularly found in dictionaries, are English translational equiva-

¹ *Amsterdamse Cahiers voor Exegese en Bijbelse Theologie*, vol. 6, 1985.

lents and, as such, not lexical meanings. That is, they are translational equivalents used to express, as far as possible, the componential features of meaning signified by the Greek sign *zēloō*. The lexical meaning along with the meaning indicated by the grammatical form of *zēloute*, as well as information afforded by other signs in the total context (textual and extratextual), need to be considered before one can determine what *zēloute* means in a context such as 1 Cor 12.31.

The lexical meaning is indeed the starting point, but it should be fully realized that the lexical meaning is not merely the same as the contextual meaning. The lexical meaning, though basic, supplies the area of signification—linguistically speaking the semantic domain of human experience. For example, *zēloō* occurs in the New Testament as a sign to represent an aspect of two semantic domains, (a) psychological attitudes and emotions, and (b) moral and ethical qualities and related behaviour. As to (a), *zēloō* may be used to signify (i) a *strong desire* in the sense of setting one's heart on something that belongs to someone else (usually rendered in English by terms such as 'covet, desire, crave for'), (ii) an *affection* involving a deep concern for or devotion to someone or something (generally rendered by 'have deep concern for, be devoted to'), (iii) an *eagerness* entailing a commitment to do something (often represented in English by 'be earnest, set one's heart on, be completely intent upon'). As to (b), *zēloō* may signify ethical behaviour in the area of experiencing strong envy and resentment against someone (for which English may use expressions such as 'be jealous, be envious, be green-eyed with envy').

Usually we analyse up to this point, and then choose from the above what seems best, with only some degree of awareness that our choice is conditioned by a number of other signs. The choice made in some of the more well-known translations of the New Testament has generally been for the imperative form and for translational equivalents such as 'covet' (KJ), 'earnestly desire' (RSV, NASB, NKJ, Berkeley), 'aim at' (NEB), 'be ambitious for' (JB), and 'set your hearts on' (NAB, GNB, Moffatt). Most translations in other languages follow suit.

Among ancient commentators Chrysostom (4th century), in his homilies on 1 Cor (homily 32), seems to have understood *zēloute* as an imperative, since he links this reading with statements on spiritual gifts that are of *more value* to the Christian community. John Damascenus, 8th century (*Ep Ad Cor* 1), however, in criticizing the Corinthians for their lack of insight in the *variety* of spiritual functions within the church, seems to have taken *zēloute* as indicative. Whether the issue is one of *more value* or of *variety* depends essentially on extratextual as well as contextual considerations. The framework within which *zēloute* is used will naturally determine whether it is understood as an indicative or an imperative, and also which lexical meaning is to be applied. Theodoret of Cyrus (5th century) takes *zēloute* in his commentary on 1 Cor to be indicative while reading the sentence as a question: 'some have read this statement as a question, namely, Do you indeed strive for better gifts?' In modern times G. Ibner (*ZNTW* 54, 1963, 43-52) understood *zēloute* as a statement in the indicative referring to a current pattern of behaviour among the Corinthians. The Dutch translation by the apologetic society 'Petrus Canisius' (Roman Catholic) likewise renders *zēloute* as an indicative '*Gij hunkert naar . . .*' ('You set your hearts on'). The

Translator's Handbook on First Corinthians by P. Ellingworth and H. Hatton allows for reading *zēloute* as either an imperative or an indicative (p.254).

The reason why most translations have chosen the imperative is probably that they regard *agapē* in Gal 5.22 as being the prime gift to strive for. Though Paul refers to *agapē* in Gal 5.22 as a 'fruit' of the Spirit, not a 'gift',² it seems that many commentators understood 'fruits' and 'gifts' to be synonymous. It is also possible that people from particular religious backgrounds and convictions may want to tone down glossolalia and, therefore, the imperative may be more appealing since it implies that certain gifts are indeed of more value than others. These scholars usually see *agapē* as a norm by which one can strive for better gifts—'strive for the better gifts, and do it in love'. However, Ibner has already shown quite convincingly that such reasoning is more a matter of justifying the inclusion of chapter 13 in 1 Corinthians 12-14 rather than an answer to the meaning of *zēloute* in 12.31.

In a sociosemiotic theory of translation a comprehensive inventory of signs is generally proposed. These include data derived from historical and cultural information in terms of the setting of the text, the level(s) of language, the communication function of language, the role expectations of the author, the presuppositions of the author and readers, the medium of presentation, rhetoric and style, syntax, progression, cohesion, pragmatics, genre, etc. Among these the structure of the discourse is perhaps a feature that deserves more attention. Discourse structure is closely related to style since it involves a number of compositional choices. As such it reveals, or rather signifies, certain clusterings with emphases on particular features of the thought content. The discourse structure is a very valuable tool to establish a framework that may function as a mode of restricting lexical, grammatical and syntactic choices. Within a sociosemiotic model of reading a text, discourse analysis often affords suitable and relatively objective arguments for deciding on matters of ambiguity—if not decisively, then at least in terms of what is more probable among a number of possibilities.

1 Cor 12 starts with statements (verses 1-3) relating to the historical and cultural setting of the problems that occurred at the time with reference to spiritual gifts (v.1). As heathens, Paul argues, many Corinthians experienced idols as mute gods. Therefore, the spiritual communication they encountered as Christians with a living God made glossolalia most attractive. From the mere content of 1 Cor 12-14 this seems to be the most probable background of the situation Paul is referring to in this section. That is to say, the Christians at Corinth valued glossolalia as probably the most important spiritual gift. Hence spiritual gifts were probably assigned a place in a hierarchy.

We may now consider the discourse structure of 1 Cor 12.4-30. The Greek text consists of 49 syntactic construction units or cola (a name of such units assigned by the ancient Greek grammarians). These sections now follow in a numbered outline as translated fairly literally into English. Note how they cluster semantically into three larger sections: 1-17, 18-39 and 40-49.

² Fruits are *all* required to be manifested in the lives of each Christian, gifts are given as the Spirit wishes (1 Cor 12.11).

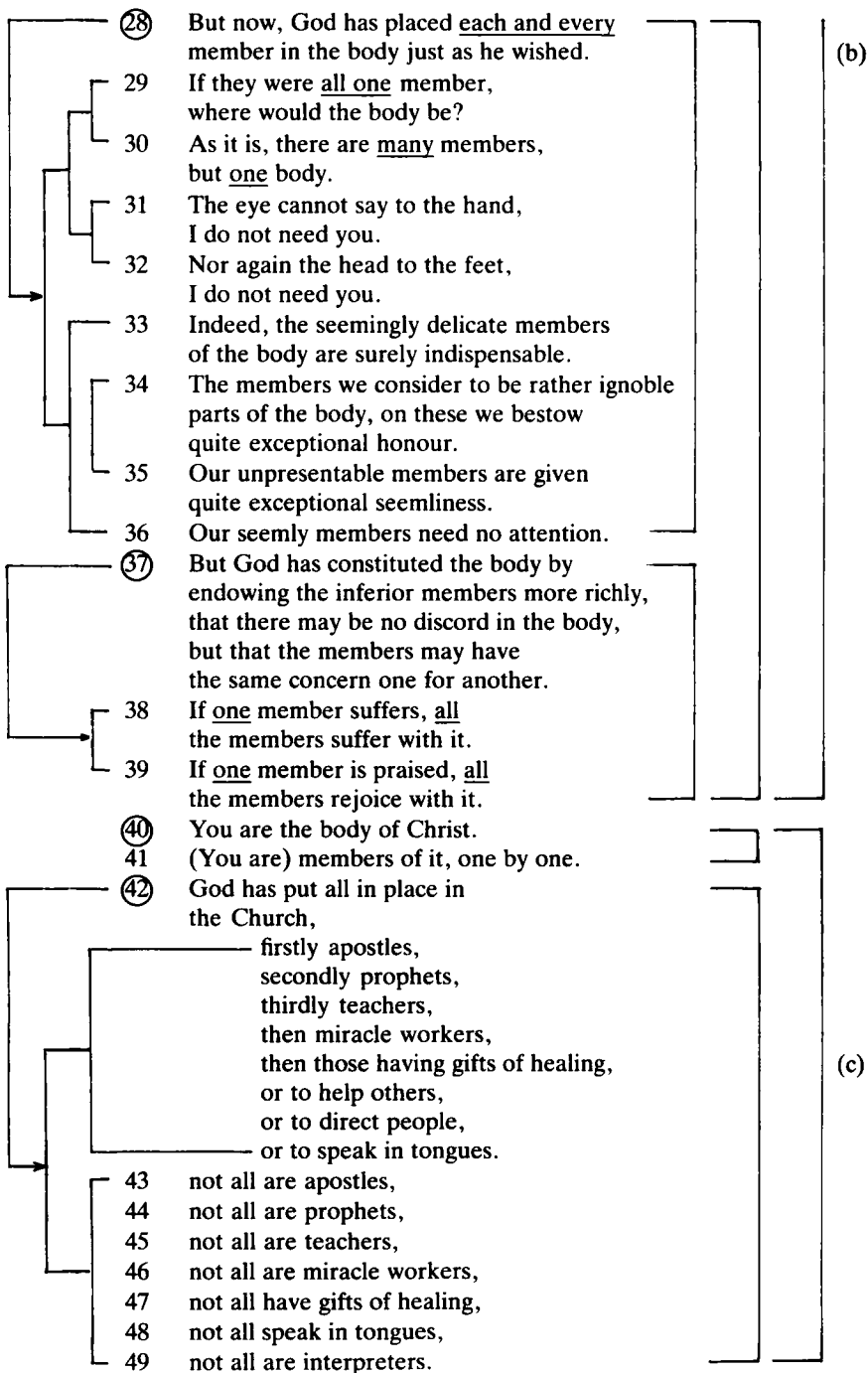
1 There are different spiritual gifts
 2 but the same Spirit gives them.
 3 There are different ways of serving,
 4 but the same Lord is served.
 5 There are different things accomplished,
 6 but the same God helps everyone to do them.
 ⑦ The presence of the Spirit is shown
 in each person for the good of all.
 8 The Spirit gives one person a
 message full of wisdom.
 9 The same Spirit gives another person
 a message full of knowledge.
 10 To another the same Spirit gives faith.
 11 To yet another the one Spirit gives
 the power to heal;
 12 to one the power to work miracles,
 13 to another prophecy,
 14 to one discernment of spiritual gifts,
 15 to another the speaking of tongues,
 16 to yet another to interpret tongues.
 ⑰ One and the same Spirit does
all this by giving a different gift
 to each person as he wishes.



(a)

⑱ Just as the body is one,
 19 (just) as it has many members,
 20 (just) as all the members of the
 body, though many, compose one body,
 so it is with Christ.
 21 By one Spirit we have all been
 baptized into one body, whether Jews
 or Greeks, or slaves or free men.
 22 (Whether Jews or Greeks, or
 slaves or free men) we were all
 given one Spirit to drink.
 ⑲ The body is not one member, but many.
 24 If the foot should say, because I am
 not the hand, I am not part of the body,
 that would not make it stop being
 part of the body.
 25 And if the ear should say, because I am not
 the eye, I am not part of the body, that would
 not make it stop being part of the body.
 26 If the entire body were an eye,
 where would the hearing be?
 27 If all were hearing, where is the smelling?





Note how the subject matter deals with (a) one Spirit (God) involved in a plurality of ministrations (colons 1-17), (b) illustrated by the analogy of the parts of the human body—one body, many parts, and (c) applied to the Christian community with its many functions. Sections (b) and (c) elaborate on section (a) which is concerned primarily with the spiritual gifts. In section (c) some of these gifts are taken up again. In colons 7, (17, 20), 28 and 42 it is explicitly stated that God (by his Spirit) administers all the gifts and functions. Through all three sections of the discourse runs one basic tone: *one* God, *many* gifts—there is no hierarchy. To strive for spiritual gifts by way of outdoing each other is futile. Such outdoing seems to have been the issue among the Corinthian Christians, which Paul has noticed to his surprise. Paul, in essence, reprimands the Corinthians for their attitude. Reading *zēloute* as an imperative would be contrary to the argument developed in chapter 12 by stressing the fact quite elaborately that there should be no hierarchy of gifts. Within such a context of reasoning it would be unwarranted for Paul to command (imperative) the Corinthians to strive for better or higher gifts.

It therefore seems more plausible to read 1 Cor 12.31 along with chapter 13, introducing a new section or pericope, and as such interpret *zēloute* as an indicative, applying the lexical meaning a(iii) above: “you strive for the best gifts, however, I show you a better way.” That is to say: if you really want to compete with each other, set your hearts on loving more.

Since 1 Cor 12.31 may be regarded as a ‘hinge’ linking chapters 12 and 13, it is also possible to consider ending chapter 12 with the complete 12.31 as is done in the Nestle-Aland text. At any rate, 12.31 should not be divided as in the UBS text. This division can only be justified if one reads *zēloute* as an imperative.

The discourse structure, which is a continuous piling up of items illustrating the notion of ONE versus MANY, almost in a linear fashion, seems rather to call for 1 Cor 12.31 (with *zēloute* as indicative) to be read as an introduction to chapter 13. As such it also affords additional justification for considering chapter 13 as an integral part of 1 Cor 12-14. This is important in view of the fact that some have even followed Weiss in his commentary on the first epistle to the Corinthians (Meyer series, 1910) in recognizing chapter 13 as an interpolation, since a reading of *zēloute* as imperative tones in well with the beginning of chapter 14. But reading *zēloute* as indicative entails that Paul resorted to a eulogy on *agapē* precisely since the Corinthians were striving for spiritual gifts in terms of a hierarchy which he deemed unjustified. Within this frame of reference it is natural for him to say that they may content themselves with a fruit of the Spirit, namely *agapē* as something to earnestly set one’s heart upon. The elaborate section on *agapē* sufficiently discredits the Corinthian attitude towards glossolalia. But this may involve his readers in going to the other extreme by concluding that he wishes to reject glossolalia as such, not merely the wrong attitude to it. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding, Paul continues in chapter 14 by commanding them (now using imperatives) to strive for love as well as spiritual gifts, but then—once again—he contrasts the value of glossolalia with prophecy. Though he does not rule out glossolalia, he merely tones it down to help the Corinthians to acquire a balanced attitude. Glossolalia (with which Paul was not at variance; see 1 Cor 14.18) is allowed within the framework of *agapē*: it

is love, then, that you should strive for—and though you may also be intent upon glossolalia, it nevertheless seems more advisable to strive for prophecy (see 1 Cor 14.5). Thus, once again Paul tones down the Corinthian attitude. Note how neatly he comes back to the same balanced approach in 1 Cor 14.39: set your hearts on prophecy but do not forbid glossolalia.

The discourse structure as part of the sociosemiotic frame of reference of 1 Cor 12-14 thus calls for a stylistic play on the term *zêloute* as indicative in 12.31 and imperative in 14.1. As a speech act Paul's initial implied criticism is changed to an implied concession.

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UNUSUAL SINNERS

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In Mark 14.41 (parallel Matthew 26.45; and see Luke 24.7) Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, says to his disciples: "The Son of Man is being handed over into the hands of *sinner*s." Judas handed Jesus over to the Jewish authorities and they, in turn, handed Jesus over to the Roman authorities. Does "sinner" in these passages refer to the Jewish authorities or the Roman authorities? And why are they called "sinner" s? All people are sinners; are these a special kind?

There are other passages in the Gospels where "sinner(s)" is used in contexts that suggest that the word means something less, or more, than what we ordinarily mean by it. Such passages were examined, and fifteen translations in English and other languages were checked to see how they have translated the word.¹

A. Jesus associates with tax collectors and sinners (Mt 9.10-11, 13; Mk 2.15-17; Lk 5.30,32; 7.34; 15.1,2,7,10; 19.7). The word is variously translated: "sinners" (Mft, Wey, Mont, NJB); "outcasts" (20C); "people with bad reputation" (SpCL, GeCL, PoCL, BrCL, ItCL, FrCL); "disreputable people" (Phps); "people with whom no respectable Jew would have anything to do" (Brcl); "irreligious" (Gdspd)²; "bad characters" (NEB).

B. Even sinners do the same (Lk 6.32-34). In this passage Jesus commands his followers to show a generous spirit not only to their friends, that is, those who belong to their group, something that even "sinners" do, but to be loving, helpful, and generous to their enemies. The translations vary: "sinners" (FrCL, SpCL, NEB, Phps, Brcl, Mont, NJB); "bad people" (PoCL); "people with bad

¹ The translations are: William Barclay (Brcl); Brazilian Common Language (BrCL); French Common Language (FrCL); German Common Language (GeCL); Goodspeed (Gdspd); Italian Interconfessional (ItCL); Moffatt (Mft); Montgomery (Mont); New English Bible (NEB); New Jerusalem Bible (NJB); Phillips (Phps); Portuguese Common Language (PoCL); Spanish Common Language (SpCL); Twentieth Century (20C); Weymouth (Wey).

² See E. J. Goodspeed *Problems of New Testament Translation*, pp. 28f, on Matthew 9.10.