

**Controversy, Consulting and the Wedding at Cana:  
Translating *Oinos* in John 2 in the Nigerian Context**

By

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The opinions expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily  
reflect the views of the South Africa Theological Seminary.

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

## **Abstract**

This paper looks at the question of how Bible translation consultants should handle controversies in general and particularly the controversy regarding how to translate the Greek word *oinos* in the northern Nigerian context. It helps the consultant recognize potential conflicts and gives advice on how to defuse them before they gain momentum. It looks in some depth at the *oinos* question by looking at real life translation stories, historical background and key elements of the debate. It reveals how almost all of the inputs to translators on this issue are from western sources and it addresses the question of whether or not cultural imperialism has played a role in how the controversy is being handled. It reveals some pitfalls that consultants fall into and how to avoid them, and it offers some suggested translation solutions based on accepted Bible translation principles.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. Problem statement

Bible translators and consultants in Nigeria sometimes find themselves involved in controversies regarding their translations. Some of them are not aware of the controversial nature of Bible translation and the kinds of heated debates that it can generate. Without knowledge about how controversies arise and some ways to handle them, translators and consultants can be blindsided by a controversy, become discouraged about their work and lose valuable time. Nigeria has over one hundred current Bible translation projects with about another two hundred possible translation needs identified, so reducing the amount of time and energy lost to controversies is crucial.

One such debate that has been going on for decades in Nigeria is the debate about how to translate the Greek word *oinos*, which in English is translated 'wine'. Specifically, should *oinos* be translated as alcoholic wine, grape juice, palm wine, grain beer or some other substance? There are a surprising number of factors that enter into this debate and there is some confusion about what is really relevant.

In my literature review, I found books and papers written about various Bible translation controversies, though I could find none regarding this controversy in Nigeria. Stephen Niyang (1997:158-162), briefly addresses translating *oinos* in the northern Nigerian context in his doctoral dissertation. Anne Kompaore's presentation on grapes and grapevines in the Bible, which she presented in Nigeria, slightly acknowledges the debate about *oinos* (Kompaore 2013, ch. 5 slide 78). Most translators in Nigeria use Translator's Workplace 5 resources to guide their exegesis. Several of these resources strongly communicate the idea that the word *oinos* in John chapter 2 can mean only an alcoholic beverage. This paper seeks to balance out these strong, mostly one-sided voices and give translators and consultants legitimate options that agree with accepted Bible translation principles.

## **1.2. The research plan**

This research was designed following a modified LIM model for practical theology (Smith 2010:41). The three major sections of the LIM model - a description of the situation as it currently is, a description of the preferred situation, and practical suggestions for how to move from the current situation to the preferred - roughly fit the sections of my research.

There are seven chapters in this paper. Chapter one introduces the paper. Chapter two looks at four Bible translation controversies occurring over the last seventy years with an eye to helping consultants recognize the significance of controversies and how to handle them. Chapter three looks in some detail at the particular controversy over translating the Greek word *oinos* in the Nigerian Bible translation context. Chapter four presents empirical research which quantifies the controversy. Chapter five discusses the question of whether cultural and theological imperialism are factors in the current handling of this controversy. Chapter six outlines a suggested model for consultants to follow in this and other controversies. Chapter seven concludes the paper.

### **1.3. Presuppositions and delimitations**

This paper approaches the Bible as the authoritative Word of God. Throughout this paper, I refer to consultants using the English generic 'he', which includes both men and women. This paper does not seek to address the theological question of whether Christians should drink alcohol. That is a question better answered by theologians, denominational leaders and individual Christians. However, that question sometimes affects this debate, so it is discussed in this paper.

### **1.4. Definitions and abbreviations**

Throughout this paper three terms are used to refer to three differing views of alcohol consumption among Christians. Gentry (2001:3-6) says,

The prohibitionist position maintains that Christians should universally avoid alcoholic beverages as unfit for human consumption, being specifically forbidden by Scripture...The abstentionist view maintains that although Scripture does not expressly forbid alcoholic beverages in toto, alcohol consumption in our society is nevertheless imprudent and should not be condoned...The moderationist view maintains that alcoholic beverages are permitted to Christians if moderately consumed and in a circumspect manner.

Standard abbreviations for Bible translations and affiliates are used as follows: New International Version (NIV), Today's New International Version (TNIV), New International Version Inclusive (NIVI), King James Version (KJV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New American Standard Bible (NASB), Today's English Version (TEV), Contemporary English Version (CEV), New Living Translation (NLT), English Standard Version (ESV), Jerusalem Bible (JB), Revised English Bible (REB) and New American Bible (NAB).

## **1.5. Personal viewpoint**

Part of this paper deals with a controversial topic. As such, it is helpful to know my personal opinion on the controversy to see if it is colouring the results. I personally think that all three positions regarding Christians drinking alcohol make excellent theological points that cannot be ignored. I am not completely committed theologically to any one position. I grew up in a family that drank beverage alcohol. For various reasons, I now practice abstinence, but still consume alcohol medicinally.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Four Bible translation controversies**

Controversy has surrounded Bible translation from the beginning. The Septuagint, the first Bible translation, faced controversy in the first century and was repudiated by Talmudic scholars (Metzger 2001:15, 20). The first English translation, John Wycliffe's 1382-88 translation, was branded heretical and William Tyndale's English translation efforts resulted in his execution in 1536. Controversy is part and parcel of the Bible translation process. When the very Word of God is at stake, people have strong opinions. Often the controversy is presented by both sides as purely an effort to maintain the accuracy of God's Word and the purity of His church. Sometimes power politics are involved. Often cultural or religious trends play a role.

The Bible translation consultant must not ignore controversies. He must become aware that the potential for controversy always exists and he should prepare himself in how to handle them. By first looking at a handful of controversies that took place over the last 70 years, the modern Bible translation consultant can gain a sense of where potential controversies may lie. More importantly, he can learn how to handle controversies better when they do come up in his context.

In this section we will look at four controversies that reflect different levels of conflict and different approaches to handling those conflicts. Each of these controversies started out small, but grew to become significant battlegrounds where enormous amounts of time, energy and money were invested to resolve them. Often controversies are very complex. However, for the sake of brevity I will simplify these controversies to what I think are the salient points.

### **2.1. The RSV controversy**

In 1952, an advertisement for the RSV read, 'Greatest Bible news in 341 years. Announcing the publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible September 30, 1952. At last! An authorized Bible in the language we use today!' (Thuesen 1999:66).

The RSV came on the scene during a time of great suspicion among the American people. The 1950s were the first decade of the Cold War when conspiracy theories about nearly everything thrived. Communism threatened America and Fundamentalists saw Liberalism as a threat to the Christian church. At the core of the Fundamentalist objections to Liberalism was their approach to the Bible. They said that Liberals wanted to conform the Bible to the modernist mind-set where no miracle could happen and it was not necessary to believe in the deity of Christ to be called a Christian. The Reverend Martin Luther Hux, a Fundamentalist, suspected the Liberals of trying to sneak their modernist agenda into churches through the newly translated RSV Bible. When he read Isaiah 7:14 and saw that the RSV said 'young woman' instead of the KJV's 'virgin', he accused the translators publicly of trying to do away with the virgin birth. He called the RSV translation a fraud and burned the offending pages. Although many Fundamentalists were angry with him for burning the Bible, they agreed with his analysis of the Liberals and joined the attack (Carson 1998:68; Metzger 2001:119-120; Thuesen 1999:94-99).

The RSV was intended to draw Protestants together in ecumenical unity (Thuesen 1999:151). In some regards, it did that. In other regards, it did just the opposite.

Fundamentalists soundly rejected the translation primarily based on the choice the translators made on one word, 'virgin'. Bobrick (2001:262) agrees with this analysis. Opponents had plenty of other problems with the translation (Thuesen 1999:106ff), but this one word was cited most frequently.

Another problem Fundamentalists had was with the words 'authorized version'. The RSV was commissioned by the National Council of Churches (NCC). Fundamentalists viewed the NCC as an ecumenical council of Liberals that was trying to dominate Christianity. To advertise that the controversial NCC was putting itself in a position of authorizing the translation was to invite a negative response. In the Fundamentalist view, the Bible authorized itself to be printed. Fundamentalists were so convinced that the Liberals were subversively trying to dominate American Christianity that they implicated the NCC as a group of communist sympathizers who were subsequently scrutinized by McCarthy (Metzger 2001:119-120; Thuesen 1999:102-103). The RSV endured long periods of public suspicion, which dramatically affected its acceptance.

Fundamentalists published the NIV (Metzger 2001:138-139), which soon became and remains America's (the centre of this controversy) number one selling Bible. RSV did not even make the top ten (Carson 1998:26; Rainer 2014).

What lessons can consultants learn from this controversy? First, the consultant should show humility to all parties. He is not authorizing the translation, he is helping guide the translation. Second, the consultant should seek to be aware of who the translation is connected to politically and encourage the translation team to avoid unnecessary conflicts of interest. He should pay attention to the religious and political climate and try to spot potential hazards. Third, the consultant should realize that the translation of one word can affect the entire translation's acceptability. He should keep an eye out for words or phrases that might spark controversy and he should encourage the translation team to do likewise. Those words should be thoroughly studied and a translation solution found that satisfies as many stakeholders as possible. Fourth, as mentioned before, the consultant should

seek to be aware of all the stakeholders, especially the powerful or vocal ones, and encourage the translation team to do their best to understand and address adequately, if possible, all their concerns.

## 2.2. The gender-inclusive language controversy

The second controversy involved an accusation that the British published NIVI and the American published TNIV went too far in trying to use 'gender-inclusive' terms. The debate involved many well-known evangelical Christian leaders and was heated and sometimes inflammatory (Poythress and Grudem 2004:1-5, 53-54, 112). It was seen by some as part of a larger debate over formal equivalence translation principles versus functional equivalence translation principles (Brunn 2013:174ff; Carson 1998:98; Grudem, Ryken, Collins, Poythress and Winter 2005:62).

One of TNIV's (and NIVI's) goals was to bring the NIV translation up to date to reflect the 'subtle shifts' of the English language regarding gender terms (TNIV 2005:vi). Several other translations had already done this. Their contention was that in many places in the Bible where the original says 'he' it actually means both genders 'he and she'. This 'generic he' is at the centre of the debate, though other related issues also exist. An example of 'generic he' is Ephesians 4:28. The NIV says, 'He who has been stealing must steal no longer', which seems gender specific. In the TNIV it says, 'Those who have been stealing must steal no longer', which seems less gender specific.

Grudem (Poythress and Grudem 2004:1) objected to this and claimed that 'The heart of the controversy is [that] in hundreds of verses the TNIV translates *only the general idea* of a passage and *omits male oriented details*'. They changed 'father' and 'son' to be 'parents' and 'children', 'brother' to be 'brother and sister' or 'believer', 'he/him/his' to a variety of non-masculine pronouns often pluralized, 'man' to 'people' or 'friends'. Grudem claimed that TNIV made the changes '...merely to avoid five simple words that many in our culture find offensive: "man", "father", "son", "brother", and "he/him/his"'. He went on to say,

If the TNIV should gain wide acceptance, the precedent will be established for other Bible translations to mute unpopular nuances and details of meaning for the sake of “political correctness”. The loss of many other doctrines unpopular in the culture will soon follow (Poythress and Grudem 2004:4-5).

The gender-inclusive objections were codified into a working document called the Colorado Springs Guidelines for Translation of Gender-Related Language in Scripture, or just ‘CSG’ (Poythress and Grudem 2004:18-19).

Poythress and Grudem (2004:175-177) laid blame on the misuse of the dynamic equivalence theory. They pointed out that the theory was rightly applied by Wycliffe Bible Translators and others to translate tribal languages with little exposure to Christianity. The theory was then rightly applied to English and European languages for people with low reading skills. However, marketers began advertising it as if it were ideal for everybody.

In this debate, accusations were made regarding falling prey to feminist and anti-feminist agendas, linguistic naiveté, manipulative language, illegitimate argument, entrenched thinking, diminishing the Word of God, laying stumbling blocks in people’s path to faith, misjudging motives and misrepresenting positions. These accusations and others sometimes helped refine the debate, but often obfuscated the real issues.

Amidst strong criticism, Zondervan published the TNIV, then ceased publishing it, then revamped it in 2011 responding to many of the criticisms, and now only offers the 2011 version. The changes were not enough for the Southern Baptist Convention (2015), which is the largest Protestant denomination in America. They threatened to not only boycott purchase of the TNIV but stop purchasing and using the NIV as well (Poythress and Grudem 2004:131). This debate has fuelled the broader debate regarding formal versus functional equivalence translations. Strauss (2015:21; Scorgie, Strauss and Voth 2003:137) claims that the ESV, generally a

more formal equivalent translation than the NIV, was published as a reaction to this debate. Popularity of the ESV is growing and it has climbed to number five in USA Bible sales, perhaps indicating a shift in acceptability in the USA market toward literalness. NIV remains number one (Rainer 2014).

In the end, there seemed to be plenty of mutual appreciation and agreement between the debaters on many issues including the need for some gender-inclusive language. They agreed that there is no single perfect translation and that no translation should by itself carry the burden of communicating God's Word. Bible helps, footnotes, sermons and other translations are needed to do this. What they still did not agree on is the amount of gender inclusive language needed and specifically whether the 'generic he' had really changed enough in the English language to warrant the changes.

What lessons can consultants learn from this controversy? Controversy is not all bad. Debate can be good. As a result of debate, the issues may become better defined and understanding increased. However, all parties need to avoid inflaming the situation. Consultants need to encourage showing respect to everybody involved, to slow down before emotionally reacting and not to make personal attacks (Poythress and Grudem 2004:405). They should not pretend to know others' motives and they should acknowledge the merit of all sides of the argument.

Poythress and Grudem (2004:143) claimed that the Committee on Bible Translation thought they were 'sole custodians' of the NIV text and could do whatever they wanted with it. This debate showed that Christendom at large, or even a vocal minority, held the power to challenge their decisions and affect the acceptability of their translation. Translators and consultants need to remember that they are accountable to the larger body of Christ and they need to be careful that they are not following a personal agenda in their translation work.

Finally, they need to realize that not all Bible translation controversies apply to their context. For example, the core issue of this debate, the 'generic he', is irrelevant in the many languages that do not have gender specific pronouns.

### **2.3. The *Allah* controversy**

A third controversy took place in Nigeria, West Africa and involved a debate regarding the use of the name *Allah* for God in the Hausa Bible. This is part of a 'worldwide' debate regarding the use of *Allah* in Bible translation. The argument against the use of *Allah* in the Hausa Bible was presented by Reverend Ishaya Garba, a second language speaker of Hausa, at a seminar in Jos, Nigeria in 2008.

In his paper titled 'A Paper Presentation on "Allah"', Reverend Garba drew conclusions from authors K.K. Degeyya (2000) (Nigerian), M. Ali (pseudonym), and Ergun Mehmer and Eethi Carner (Swiss/Turkish) saying, 'In their different (respective) published books, they argue that *Allah* is not the supreme being in [the] Hausa language but an Arabic *Allah*[,] a spirit entity among the Arabs that existed with Satan and manifested in 570 A.D.' (Garba 2008:4). He quotes Carner and Carner (2002:104) who say, 'Muslims and Christians had agreed that *Allah* and Jehovah (Yahweh) are not the same', and M. Ali (1999:47) saying, 'The name *Allah* does not belong to the true God, but to an Arabic idol'. Another Nigerian author, G. J. O. Moshay (1990) also came to the conclusion that the name *Allah* cannot be used to represent the Christian God.

Rev. Ishaya Garba's primary issues in the debate were: 1) *Allah* is a borrowed Arabic word and is not originally Hausa and that Hausa has a better word for God: *Ubangiji*. 2) *Allah* is not the supreme being, but an angel of light (demon) who gave Muhammed his revelation. 3) God's revealed name, which was confirmed by Jesus, is Yahweh. 4) Objection to using *Allah* in Bible translation is a worldwide phenomenon condemned by a 'million Christian faithfuls (sic)', the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) (Garba 2008:2-10).

The references to CBN and TBN are significant, because these two television networks had a strong presence in Nigeria at that time (Christian Broadcasting Network 2015; Trinity Broadcasting Network 2015). Those stations carried television evangelists who were making accusations against American pastors and others claiming that they were trying to join Christianity together with Islam into what they called 'Chrislam'. John Torell's (2015) website cites a Nigerian attempt to create 'Chrislam'.

Proponents for using *Allah* in the Hausa translation (hereafter simply 'the proponents') who spoke at the seminar included Dr David Moomo (Nigerian, Bible Society of Nigeria consultant), Dr David Gowon (Nigerian public figure), Dr John Adiva (Nigerian Bible translator/administrator), Hajiya (Nigerian Muslim background believer (MBB)), Dr Adamu Garba (Nigerian minister) and others. I give their names and nationalities to show that they were all Nigerians. There were several scholarly expatriates with strong opinions who also attended the debate, but they refrained from presenting arguments preferring that Nigerians argued this local debate. Dr Gowon and Dr Garba presented papers at the seminar. Others gave oral presentations.

Dr Gowon mentioned that the Bible Society of Nigeria was inundated with letters asking that they remove the word *Allah* from the Hausa Bible translations (Gowon 2008:3). Dr Moomo pointed out that this issue had only become prominent since the vicious attacks by Muslims against Christians that began in Jos on September 7, 2001, and was likely only a response to those attacks. Together, the proponents countered Rev. Ishaya Garba's points saying: 1) Although *Allah* is borrowed from Arabic, it has been completely adopted into the language and it is the term that Hausa-speaking Christians were using to refer to the creator God long before the first Bible translation. The term Ubangiji is not the generic term for God. It means Lord, so it cannot be used as such. 2) When Muslims refer to *Allah*, they think he is the creator God. Their concept of God, however, is very different from a Christian's. Calling God *Allah* does not diminish who he is to the Christian. 3) Yahweh is the personal name for God. *Allah* is the generic name for God. Wherever a generic

Hebrew term for God is used, *Allah*, the generic Hausa term for God, should be used. 4) What is true in other parts of the world regarding this issue is not necessarily true here.

The proponents asked if the Hausa-speaking Christians present had a problem using *Allah* for the biblical God. The unanimous answer was no. One Hausa speaking Muslim background believer stood up and said that if *Allah* were removed from the Bible, she and her people would not read it. By the end of the debate, those against using *Allah* in Bible translation seemed convinced that it was acceptable to use *Allah* in the Hausa Bible.

Brown (2008) and Thomas (2006), who were not directly involved in the Nigerian debate, both came to the conclusion that the Aramaic term *Alah(a)* was what Jesus likely used and it was borrowed into Arabic and later became used by Muslims to refer to God. It is interesting to note that while a tiny minority of Nigerian Christians were fighting to get *Allah* removed from the Hausa Bible, a majority of Malaysian Christians were, and still are, fighting their government for the right to keep *Allah* in their Bible (Steffan 2013).

What lessons can consultants learn from this controversy? First, the proponents showed positive steps in handling the controversy by taking seriously the complaints of a tiny minority of their audience. They gave them a good, public hearing. They gave them good answers to their questions. They did not demean them. Both sides of the debate were documented by written papers. Second, controversies can be imported. The widespread availability of satellite TV and internet can bring an issue from outside the community and facilitate its spread in the community very rapidly. Consultants need to find out where a controversy is coming from. Knowing the origin of the controversy can do a lot for properly handling it. Third, controversies that are relevant in other parts of the world may not be relevant in the local consultant's context. Fourth, it is better to allow local people who understand the situation and the culture to work out a solution, though consultants should give input.

## **2.4. The familial language controversy**

The final controversy to be considered occurred in the last decade and involved a debate regarding the use of familial language. In the years prior to 2011, Christians began to accuse Wycliffe/SIL of removing familial terms like 'Son of God' and 'Father' from their Bible translations in order to make them more acceptable to Muslims. In 2011, the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) officially made that accusation. They later threatened to break fellowship if Wycliffe/SIL did not respond with a change of its policy. In August, 2011, Wycliffe convened a meeting to set standards of best practices on this issue (Hansen 2011).

Those standards were found unacceptable by the Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM) director, Dr Greg Mundis. In January 2012, he and his organization made formal accusations similar to those of the PCA and also made a threat of separation. The details are complex but the complaint primarily revolved around 30-40 translations in a Muslim region that received approval from their consultants to use less than literal terms for 'Son of God' and 'Father' (Hansen 2011). Wycliffe/SIL leaders travelled to AGWM headquarters and explained in detail the linguistic and translation reasons why their translators were translating that way. From these meetings it became clear that an outside arbiter was needed in order to reconcile the differences of opinion. Wycliffe/SIL agreed to an external review of its practices by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and committed to follow whatever recommendations the WEA came up with (The WEA global review panel 2013:2). On April 15, 2013 the WEA panel concluded its review and presented a list of ten recommendations, which Wycliffe/SIL agreed to follow. Part of that agreement was to translate 'Son of God' and 'Father' literally, using footnotes and glossary entries to explain the meanings (The WEA global review panel 2013:6-10; SIL standards 2015).

What lessons can consultants learn from this controversy? First, with the advent of the internet, news about Bible translations is becoming more and more public and being monitored by more people. A single consultant's (or more than one in this

case) actions even in a remote place can quickly involve the entire worldwide translation community. Consultants need to pay attention to complaints and seek to resolve them thoroughly before they fester into major issues. Second, sometimes good-hearted people just have an honest difference of opinion, and those differences need to be recognized and respected. Bible translation consultants are servant-leaders in the body of Christ. There may be times when a consultant thinks he knows what is best, but he still needs to realize that the Word of God belongs to the whole body of Christ and not just to an isolated group. He may need to set aside his opinions and follow the advice of others. Wycliffe/SIL showed a good example of humble leadership, even when many ignorant accusations were being made against them by others (not by AGWM or PCA) on websites and religious broadcasting networks. Consultants may find that in a controversy of this magnitude, an outside, mutually respected arbiter will need to be consulted.

A silver lining to this controversy is a quote by Dr Mundis in which he said, 'Let us not deceive ourselves; Bible translation is the foundation to all ministry' (AGWM 2012:12). May the worldwide church hear this comment and respond appropriately.

### **2.5. Chapter conclusion**

Looking at these four controversies, the Bible translation consultant can glean many lessons on how to handle a Bible translation controversy. Let us now turn our attention to a current Bible translation controversy that has been in Nigeria for decades, and apply what we have learned to that controversy.

## Chapter 3

### Translating the Greek word *oinos* in Nigeria

#### 3.1. A serious translation issue – two Nigerian stories

From 2006, when I started doing small amounts of Bible translation consulting, until now, I have encountered conflicting opinions about how the Greek word *oinos* should be translated into Nigerian languages. Some were adamant that it should be translated at all costs as an alcoholic substance. English is the national language. Since all major English translations had translated it 'wine', which most people consider alcoholic, vernacular translations should reflect the same. On the other side of the debate were those who were adamant that it should sometimes be translated as a non-alcoholic substance. This paper does not seek to settle the debate. It does seek to show the depth and seriousness of the debate and to offer some guidelines for consultants and translation teams to follow.

The Bible translation consultant may be tempted to write this off as a minor issue not worthy of his time and effort. The following true stories may change his mind.

### **3.1.1. The Ngas New Testament translation**

In May, 2015, I interviewed PhD candidate Ishiyaku Kubgak, Bible translation project coordinator for the Ngas Old Testament project and his colleague, Bible translator Rotshak Golmut. The Ngas people are primarily found in Plateau State, Nigeria.

They told me their story about translating the Greek word *oinos* in their New Testament. According to them, the western linguist/exegete involved in the project recommended translating *oinos* as 'moss' (also *moos* or *mwos*), a locally made cereal grain alcohol. Since he was a consultant, the translation team agreed. Selbut Longtau (personal communication) reports that the late Prof. Daniel Wambutda (Nigerian) insisted on using *moos* in the translation. When the translation was printed and more widely dispersed, many people reacted very strongly against it. Ishiyaku reported them saying, 'How could Jesus turn water into alcohol? How can Paul encourage Timothy to drink alcohol? No!' Their people had been so devastated by widespread drunkenness that it was repulsive for them to think of Jesus and Paul doing that.

Drunkenness was so well known among the Ngas and Berom peoples that Nigerian author Rev. Dr Gyang D. Pam (2011:10) says,

When I was young there was this very popular song which was sang to ridicule the Berom people and Ngas [people] because it was presumed that alcohol was our main food; "Berom da Ngas ku daina shangiyar moss", meaning the Berom and Ngas should stop drinking the local brewed alcoholic drink called "moss".

Christians in both communities had made great strides in reducing the level of drunkenness, and the Ngas people did not want anything, especially the Bible, to harm that progress.

The Ngas translation committee later decided to use 'water of grapes', the same as the trade language Hausa translation did. This was far from perfect, because there are no grapes in Ngas-land, and there are no drinks made from fruit juices, so it was

all a foreign idea. 'However', reported Ishiyaku, 'fruit juice is being sold in the market now and is becoming known, so now it is not so foreign'. They use footnotes in their translation to explain what grapes are, and for those who do not read the footnotes, they added a picture of grapevines and grapes.

The Ngas experience points to the huge need for widespread testing of translations prior to mass printing.

### **3.1.2. A ten thousand dollar purchase based on *oinos***

I interviewed a Nigerian conservative evangelical denominational leader (name withheld) who was preparing to spend one million naira on Hausa Bibles for his denomination for that year. The exchange rate at the time was approximately 100 naira per US dollar, so the purchase was for approximately \$10,000. His choice came down to two translations. He looked long and hard at the two translations, which were nearly identical. (In fact, one publisher had accused the other publisher of plagiarizing their Bible, changing only a few words, and printing it as their own.) He reported to me that in the end his decision came down to one word in the translation. That word was the Hausa translation of the Greek word *oinos*. It was one of the few words that was different from one translation to the other.

The Bible he chose used the term *ruwan inabi*, which means 'water of grapes' and does not indicate whether it is alcoholic or not. This fit well with the official prohibitionist stance of his denomination. They believe that Jesus did not turn water into alcoholic wine, but rather wine that had not fermented yet. It is one of the largest protestant denominations in Nigeria. The Bible he did not choose had translated the Greek word *oinos* as 'giya', a locally made alcohol. It was unacceptable to him and his denomination to think of Jesus turning water into large quantities of something that they found to be so harmful to their people. This story illustrates the impact that this one word can have on the acceptability of a translation.

### 3.2. A serious theological issue

It is important at this point to distinguish between the theological debate regarding Christians drinking alcohol and the separate but related issue of translating *oinos* in the Bible. The issues are related because part of the theological debate centres around how translators have chosen to translate *oinos*. The issues should be kept separate so that the theological issue does not drive the whole decision regarding how to translate *oinos*. At least it should not force the translator or consultant to choose sides in the debate to the exclusion of other legitimate but more accommodating options.

Some people view translating *oinos* as simply a cultural and historical fact that should not be influenced by theology, but theology has been colouring translations from the beginning and 'cultural and historical fact' can be a matter of interpretation. William A. Smalley (1991:95) says,

Martin Luther...concluded that all of the Bible should be interpreted in light of his understanding of justification by faith...This illustrates a belief that translation should be based on a theological position rather than only on exegesis of the passage being translated.

I am not suggesting that translators do this, but the consultant cannot ignore the fact that his, or a translator's, culture and theology colour the way that he translates to some degree, no matter how hard he tries to escape it. Smalley (1991:96) continues,

Unconscious theological effect is always present, even when translators seek rigorously to base their work on biblical exegesis. And what is convincing exegetical evidence to one person may not be to another with different presuppositions.

There are times, as illustrated in the Serampore example referred to in paragraph 6.2.5 of this paper, when the translator may need to consciously consider theology when translating. He should avoid consciously bending the translation to fit his own

personal theology, and he should be aware of competing theologies within his target audience and be willing to translate in a manner that accommodates those that fit within the Christian orthodoxy established by his translation organization.

By calling this a ‘serious theological issue’ I merely want to underscore how serious the debaters are about the theological topic and the depth with which they are approaching it. Gentry (2001:7) says, ‘It has been a raging debate for over 200 years...[generating] vigorous disagreement within Christian churches, often leading to strife and contention’.

We will now look at some of the theological issues and their history. It will be helpful for the consultant to know that strong arguments exist on both sides of the debate. I will only mention some of the major topics and give a few details.

### **3.2.1. *Historical background of theological positions***

The prohibitionist and abstentionist positions became popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1784, United States Surgeon General Dr Benjamin Rush (1812) called on American pastors to preach against the evils of drinking distilled alcohol because of the societal and personal destruction he saw. In England, the British were struggling with the ‘gin craze’ and as vice-chamberlain Lord Hervey put it, ‘the whole town of London swarmed with drunken people from morning till night’ (Eighteenth Century 2014).

The British Temperance movement was created by mostly middle class moderationists to help the working class reduce or ‘temper’ their excessive drinking (Smith 1993:3). In the 1830s working class ‘teetotallers’ took it a step farther and signed pledges to have nothing to do with beverage alcohol. Ten percent of the British population signed these abstinence pledges (Walker 2004). In Ireland, the abstinence movement also had a large following (Quinn 2002). Teetotallers eventually alienated many moderationists in the Temperance movement and teetotalism as a movement all but died out in England. A minority of the British

Temperance movement shifted to prohibitionist tactics. They sought to legislatively prohibit alcohol consumption, but were not very successful (Ziegler 2002).

In America, the prohibition movement also waxed and waned but gained tremendous support in the early twentieth century. In 1919, the US Constitution was amended to make the production, transportation and consumption of beverage alcohol illegal (Peterson, Nisenholz and Robinson 2003:12; Gentry 2001:2). The success of this movement is attributed largely to the rise of evangelical Protestantism and women getting the right to vote (Scheb and Scheb 2009:224). In 1933 Prohibition was declared unenforceable at a federal level and was repealed, but many counties and municipalities remain 'dry' to this day (List of dry, 2012).

### **3.2.2. *Publications that shaped the theological debate***

Many publications regarding this debate were produced from the eighteenth to the twenty first century. Two essays titled Bacchus (Grinrod 1830) and Anti-Bacchus (Parsons 1840), named after the Roman god of wine, presented much of the medical and biblical reasoning for abstention and prohibition. In 1841, Reverend John Maclean (1841) wrote a retort to these essays and the published debate was born. Two other seminal publications were The Temperance Bible Commentary (Lees and Burns 1870) and William Patton's (1871) Bible Wines or Laws of Fermentation and Wines of the Ancients. A quick scan of Amazon's current offerings shows that more than a dozen modern books on both sides of this controversy are available and many quote Patton or use his same arguments (Bachiochi 1989; Gentry 2001; Jaeggli 2014; Lumpkins 2009; Malcomsen 2013; Reynolds 2003; Teachout 1986; West 2003).

### **3.2.3. *Examples of the arguments used in the theological debate***

The theological debate does not centre on how much a Christian should drink, because all agree that drunkenness is wrong, but whether a Christian should drink at all. Both sides look to Scripture as the final arbiter of truth, so both sides look at all

the Scriptures that seem to mention alcohol and give their interpretations of what they mean. There are far too many to list here.

One of the first arguments encountered in this debate is the definition of the Greek word *oinos*. Both sides look at all the Scriptures using *oinos* to see how it should be understood (Ewing 1985:7-69; Gentry 2001:67-71; Reynolds 2003). (They also look at the Hebrew *yayin*, *tiros* and other alcohol related words, but we will restrict the discussion here to *oinos*.) Prohibitionists claim that there is strong evidence to suggest that *oinos* could refer to both alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages depending on the context (Stamps 2010; Teachout 1986:39-42). This is often called the 'Two Wine Theory'. They cite passages like Ephesians 5:18, in which *oinos* clearly refers to alcoholic wine. Then they tie the Hebrew *yayin* together with *oinos* and quote verses like Isaiah 16:10, in which *yayin* appears to be talking about freshly picked grapes and their juice (Stamps 2010; Teachout 2015:15). In their view, *oinos* can refer to either alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverage. Moderationists counter and say that these latter references are due to poetic license commonly found in Hebrew poetry (Gentry 2001:42).

Prohibitionists also claim that the Septuagint (and other ancient writings like Aristotle's *Meteorologica* and writings by Nicander and Anacreon) used *oinos* to refer to both wine and juice (Teachout 2015:15) and that the Latin term *vinum* and the English term 'wine', which were used to translate *oinos*, were used until relatively recently to refer to both wine and juice (Bacchiocchi 1989:54-73).

Moderationists argue that *oinos* could not mean juice, because there was no way to preserve grape juice in those days to keep it from naturally fermenting. Prohibitionists quickly turn to ancient descriptions of viticulture and grape preservation and show that the technology existed. They refer to ancient sources like Pliny, Virgil, Josephus, Columella, Cato and others (Parsons 1840; Patton 1871; Reynolds 2003). Moderationists argue that even though the technology existed, there is little evidence to suggest that it was in wide usage. Both sides refer in detail

to the chemical processes of fermentation to bolster their case (Gentry 2001:40; Patton 1871:15).

Moderationists claim that Jesus, and all Jews, drank wine every day, but prohibitionists say this is speculation.

There are a number of arguments concerning wine mixed with water. Prohibitionists say that when alcohol was consumed by moral people in ancient times, according to Pliny and others, it was diluted with water. They also cite Plutarch's *Moralia* where he only extols wine when it is mixed four parts water to one part wine which renders it nearly non-intoxicating (Teachout 1986:52). Moderationists retort that Pliny (and presumably Plutarch) is an extra-biblical source and that the only thing the Bible says about mixing water with wine is that it is bad (Isaiah 1:22; Gentry 2001:143-146). Another argument is that wine was put in water to disinfect it, but some studies show that there is not enough alcohol in wine to effectively do that (Weisse and Moore 2003:309; The Straight Dope, 2011).

Both sides of the debate refer to Jewish religious writings and practices (Bacchiocchi 1989:193-194). Through the centuries there has been debate among Jewish rabbis about whether the Passover should be celebrated with grape juice or wine. Some of that debate centres on the fact that wine has yeast in it, which is technically an agent of spoiling and is forbidden to be present in any form during the Passover (Bacchiocchi 1989:159-162; Ewing 1985:97-102).

Prohibitionists and abstentionists argue that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and that we should respect them by doing no harm to them. They say that consuming alcohol is harmful to your body and is the cause of numerous diseases and fetal-alcohol birth defects (Grinrod 1830; Substances Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA] 2006). Moderationists quote modern medical journals that say alcohol naturally occurs in mammals and that moderate drinking by healthy people is good for them (Gentry 2001:135-140).

Prohibitionists and many abstentionists focus attention on the destruction that alcohol can bring about. Their statistics regarding alcohol's major involvement in violent crime, birth defects, child abuse, divorce, destroyed lives, squandered finances, billions of dollars of lost annual workplace productivity, deaths and accidents all create a strong social case for not drinking alcohol or even allowing it in society (Bacchiocchi 1989:286-289; Teachout 1986:5-7). Secular statistics bear out its dangers. A 2010 study done in the UK reports alcohol as the drug most dangerous to society (Nutt, King, and Philips 2010). Moderationists agree these things are bad, but point out that these are the result of alcohol abuse, not of responsible use.

Many prohibitionists and abstentionists apply Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8 to this issue and conclude that the believer should live a life of abstaining from alcohol to avoid causing a weaker brother to stumble, sin or even walk away from his faith. Moderationists like Gentry (2001:125-128) agree with prohibitionists and abstentionists that believers must love and be responsible toward one another, that they must not judge each other, and that they must live according to their convictions. Where moderationists differ is that they do not believe anything in creation is inherently evil (many prohibitionists believe beverage alcohol is evil) and that the abstainer is the weak brother in these verses who must be patiently brought along to the more mature (stronger) moderationist position on this issue.

In conclusion, both sides of the theological debate make their case by digging deeply into Scripture, Greek and Hebrew, history, chemistry, culture and social convention. Both sides give strong arguments. Neither side, in my opinion, can claim a clear, overwhelming victory, so both sides should be considered when translating *oinos*.

### **3.3. A serious social issue**

Alcohol consumption in Nigeria is becoming a more serious social issue as it rapidly increases, especially in urban settings (Lythgoe 2013). According to the World

Health Organization (WHO) (2011) statistics, Nigerians drink more alcohol per capita than any other African nation. Adults fifteen years or older drink 12.28 litres of pure ethyl alcohol per year (equivalent to 865 12 ounce beers), while their immediate neighbours drink significantly less: Benin 2.15 litres, Togo 1.99 litres, Niger 0.34 litres, Cameroon 3.35 litres. The UK averages 13.4 litres per person and the US averages 9.4 litres (WHO 2011:267-77). When one considers that more than half of the Nigerian population (Muslims plus Christians in some denominations) is strictly prohibited by their religion from consuming alcohol, these statistics become even more alarming. The alcohol consumption rate among those who actually drink is 32.1 litres per year – one of the highest rates in the world (WHO 2011:276). With higher rates of alcohol consumption come higher rates of disease, societal dysfunction and crime (WHO 2011:20-37).

For centuries Nigerians have brewed their own grain beer and palm wine. They did not bottle it, so supply was limited to what they could produce every few days. In the past few decades, Nigeria has seen a sharp increase in the number of corporate breweries and distilleries (Awoyinfa 2012:526). This has made alcohol much more accessible due to wider distribution and storage possibilities and more potent due to higher alcohol content of products.

Nigerian attitudes toward drinking alcohol range from those who drink daily to those who think drinking is sin and never touch a drop. Islam forbids drinking alcohol. Regardless, some Muslims drink in bars even under threat of televised humiliation by Muslim authorities and bombing by Boko Haram (British Broadcasting Corporation 2015). Christians in Nigeria are divided on the issue. As elsewhere in the world there are moderationists, abstentionists and prohibitionists. Drunkenness is shameful in all three major Nigerian religions, Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR), even though drinking alcohol is an important part of ATR worship and is an act of communion with deities (Awoyinfa 2012:525-527).

### **3.4. A serious church discipline issue**

Most conservative evangelical churches in Nigeria view drinking alcohol as a serious sin and address it with public church discipline. Many of these churches also see it as a barrier to reaching Muslims, since Muslims are forbidden to drink alcohol.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Empirical research**

#### **4.1. Informal survey – consultants and translators**

The practical question that this section seeks to answer is: Is there a genuine controversy and what are the important factors involved as perceived by translators and consultants? To answer this I travelled to Jos, Nigeria and used two different instruments: an informal survey and a formal questionnaire.

In July, 2014, I travelled from Oregon (USA) to Jos, Nigeria and participated as a consultant in a Bible translation workshop sponsored by Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) and The Seed Company (TSC). TSC, SIL, Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT), Calvary Ministries (CAPRO) and Wycliffe Associates (WA) were involved. Twenty-five Nigerian Bible translation teams of two to five people and more than twenty-five consultants and consultants-in-training participated in the workshop. Fifty-two people from the workshop participated in the survey. Twelve were consultants with eight of those being westerners.

**4.1.1. First question: Is there conflict over this issue?**

I prefaced this survey by saying that I wanted to ask some questions about the alcoholic content of the drink at the wedding of Cana. I told them that this was part of my Master's degree research and that I would keep their names confidential. I also stressed that I was not trying to answer the question of whether or not Christians should drink alcohol, since many people seem to gravitate toward that when this topic is raised. I asked them to focus on the translation questions at hand. I read the John chapter two text out loud. My first question was, 'Do you perceive conflict in your project regarding the translation of the Greek word *oinos* in this passage, which in English is translated "wine"?' Of the fifty-two people present, approximately forty raised their hands. I randomly chose people and asked them to describe their conflicts. The conflicts they described fell into three primary categories. First, their consultants insisted they translate it one way, but the translation team felt it should be translated another. Second, the translators' denominations told them one thing and the consultant told them something different. Third, members of the translation team disagreed with each other, usually based on denominational differences. These answers established that there was conflict on this issue in a majority of these Nigerian translation projects. The fact that there was conflict does not indicate a major problem, incompetence or anything truly negative. Conflict handled in healthy ways leads to discussion and deeper understanding of various viewpoints.

**4.1.2. Second question: Was it alcoholic or non-alcoholic?**

This was actually a series of nested questions. I asked for their personal opinion about whether the beverage at the wedding of Cana was alcoholic or non-alcoholic. I told them they would be voting by raising their hands, and I listed all three options. I asked them to base their opinions on some sort of evidence. I first asked for those who thought it was definitely alcohol to raise their hands. Among those whose hands went up, I asked if the evidence for their opinion was internal to the text or external. For those who indicated it was external, I asked them what their sources

were. I then followed the same procedure for those who thought it was non-alcoholic, and finally for those who thought it could have been either.

The following are the results:

1) It was definitely alcoholic wine.

Twenty-five said it was definitely alcoholic. Of those twenty-five, seven were western consultants. Eighteen of those twenty-five said that their evidence was internal to the text. All of the western consultants said their evidence was internal. One person said his evidence was based outside the text and it was other verses in the Bible. Six did not say where their evidence came from.

2) It was definitely non-alcoholic grape juice.

Sixteen said it was definitely non-alcoholic. None were consultants. Nine based their opinion on internal evidence. Two based it on outside evidence, which consisted of other Bible verses that tell believers not to drink. Four did not say where their evidence came from.

3) It could have been either alcohol or not.

Eleven said it could have been either alcoholic or not. None were consultants. Nine based their opinion on internal evidence. Two based it on outside evidence, which were Bible verses from Proverbs about not drinking wine.

#### **4.1.3. Summary of trends – informal survey**

A large majority perceived that there was a conflict regarding this issue. Twenty-five out of fifty-two thought the beverage was definitely alcoholic, eleven thought it was definitely non-alcoholic, while sixteen said it could have been either. A majority said that the information within the passage was their primary evidence. The five respondents who said their evidence was from outside the text referred to other verses in the Bible to make their case. No other evidence was offered.

## 4.2. Formal questionnaire for translators

The following year, in March, 2015, I again travelled to Jos, Nigeria and participated in a Bible translation workshop sponsored by NBTT and TSC. Consultants from SIL, LBT, CAPRO and WA were also involved. Ten Nigerian Bible translation teams and more than ten consultants and consultants-in-training participated. Most of the teams consultant checked the book of Acts during this three week workshop. The questionnaire was handed out toward the middle of the three week workshop so that participants would have time to contact me with more information after filling in the questionnaire if they wanted to. No leading introduction was given. They were simply told that it was part of research for my Master's degree, that they should answer honestly, and that they would have anonymity. They were told they could leave off their name if they wished, but none did. This questionnaire was given to translation team members. The original questionnaire had the following format but with expanded spaces for writing:

### Translation Team Survey Form:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_ Language: \_\_\_\_\_  
Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the following passage and answer the questions below:

[John 2:1-9 NIV was printed here.]

- 1) Did Jesus turn the water into something with alcohol in it or something that did not have alcohol in it?
- 2) What is your evidence for saying this? (Please give as much detail as you can. Use the back of this form if necessary.)
- 3) If you use a resource outside the above text, please give the name, year it was published and the author or a URL so it can be looked up.

If you are a translator involved in a project, answer these questions:

- 4) Did your consultant give you advice about how to translate the Greek word *oinos* (wine)? What was his/her advice?
- 5) What term did you use in your translation for the Greek word *oinos* (wine)?
- 6) What does this term mean?
- 7) Does it indicate whether there was alcohol in the wine or not?
- 8) Has anybody in your language group commented about how you translated the Greek word *oinos* (wine)? What were their comments?

If you have further comments about this topic, email me at [mark\\_gaddis@sil.org](mailto:mark_gaddis@sil.org) or flash me at: 07035057096 until May 15, 2015.

The design of this instrument was a bit more subtle than the previous instrument. Rather than ask directly if there was conflict in the project over this issue, I tried to ask questions that would reveal conflict without actually stating it too directly. I asked for the age of each participant in order to determine if there were generational attitudes involved in the answers. I asked for the language group in case that became a factor. Church denomination was asked in order to determine if there were trends relating to whether a person came from a moderationist, abstentionist or prohibitionist denomination.

#### **4.2.1. Results of the translator's questionnaire**

Distribution by age in years:

20-30: 1

31-40: 3

41-60: 11

over 60: 5

unanswered: 4

Distribution by language: not used in this study.

Distribution by church:

Catholic: 2

COCIN (Church of Christ in Nations): 4

ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All): 10

EYN (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa Nigeria - Brethren): 2

Independent Pentecostal: 3

LCCN (Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria): 2

SDA (Seventh Day Adventist): 1

Catholic and LCCN allow their members to drink alcohol in moderation.

ECWA, SDA, EYN, COCIN and Pentecostals are prohibitionists or abstentionists and do not allow drinking by members of their churches.

The following numbers and statistics match the questionnaire numbers above.

1) Was it alcoholic or non-alcoholic?: Non-alcoholic: 21 Alcoholic: 3

2) What is your evidence for saying this?

Non-alcoholic answers:

Alcohol/drunkenness is bad and Jesus would not do anything bad: 7

It was a special holy category of wine: 1

The grape juice did not have time to ferment: 5

Context of passage: 7 (1 said aged palm wine does not taste good. This tasted good, so it can't be wine), nobody misbehaved.

Alcoholic answers:

Context of passage: 1

English says wine, not fresh wine: 1

Conflicted answer: 1 (He said it was alcoholic, but then said 'only alcoholic bev worths [sic] change or age over time. Non-alcohols [sic] don't ferment hence retain their original taste. Fermented wine sours, tastes worse, alcohol stunts perception'.)

3) Three used outside resources.

An ECWA translator referred to Translator's Workplace 5 (TW5). LCCN, COCIN and ECWA translators referred to the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke. COCIN used English Bibles and English dictionary. One said Hausa Bible uses 'water of grapes'. The other twenty-one referred to the context of the passage.

4) Consultant advice:

No advice has yet been given: 3

Use non-alcoholic term: 16 (2 from the same language used 'iwaynu', a transliteration of English but non-alcoholic. One of them said 'If alcohol is not cherished in your culture or people will think that Jesus support [sic] using wine, then we should look for a word for juice'.)

Use alcoholic term: 1 (He noted that his people did not accept it, so they changed it).

Question left blank: 3

5-7) Terms for wine:

water of grapes: 14

water of fruit other than grapes: 1

Transliterate wine: 2

Sweet water: 1

Palm tree sap (yet unfermented): 1

Cover term for alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks: 1

8) Any comments from your language group members?

There were no negative comments and a few that said the community was happy with what they translated for this, both Protestant and Catholic.

**4.2.2. Summary of trends - translators formal questionnaire**

There were twenty four participants. Age and denomination did not seem to be a factor in the answers given. Twenty-one participants thought the Cana beverage was non-alcoholic. The reasons they gave for this answer were evenly divided between theological, scientific and textual reasons. Twenty-one relied on evidence internal to the text. Three cited sources outside the text including TW5, a dictionary, the Hausa Bible and other Scriptures. Fourteen of twenty-four used the term 'water of grapes', the same term used in the trade language Hausa Bible. Surprisingly, sixteen of seventeen that were given consultant advice were advised to use a non-alcoholic term.

**4.3. Formal questionnaire for consultants**

Consultants did not receive the above questionnaire, but instead received a special consultant questionnaire. Below is a copy of the form, though the original had expanded spaces for writing in answers. The questionnaire was offered with the

option of anonymity, but I did ask for their nationality to determine if they were from a historically drinking culture.

Consultant survey form

Name: (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Please estimate how many times you have consultant checked John chapter 2:
- 2) At the story of the wedding of Cana, Jesus turns water into wine. As a consultant, how have you (or would you) advise a translation team to translate the Greek word *oinos*, which is normally translated in English as 'wine'?
- 3) Please number the following options in the order of your preference, and when possible, give a reason why.

- A non-grape derivative non-alcoholic beverage
- A grape derivative clearly non-alcoholic beverage
- A grape derivative beverage that could be alcoholic or non-alcoholic
- A grape derivative beverage that is clearly alcoholic
- A non-grape derivative beverage that is clearly alcoholic

- 4) Are there other factors that you think are important in making this decision?

What resources would you consult to make this decision?

- 5) If one of the translators was arguing against indicating it was alcoholic and one was arguing that it must be represented as alcoholic, what would you say to both members of the team?

#### **4.3.1. Results of the consultant questionnaire**

Name was optional. Three did not give their names.

Nationality:

Nigerian: 2

Canadian: 1

USA: 4

UK: 1

Other African: 1

The following is a tabulation of results corresponding with the numbered questions on the form.

1) Number of times participant consultant checked John 2: (The assumption here is that the more times a consultant checks John, the more thought he will have put into this passage. 'USA#1: 2' means American consultant #1 checked John twice.)

USA#1: 2; USA#2: 2; USA#3: 3; UK#1: 15; All others: 0

2) How you (would) advise teams:

'Has to be historically accurate - alcohol made from grapes'.

'While I prefer retaining the historical situation, acceptability trumps'.

'I advise a word that could be alcoholic or not'.

'First choice is use a word for wine, even borrowed, as long as it is known'.

'Wine with alcohol'.

'Fermented grape juice (alcoholic)'.

'Beer of fruits'.

No answer: 2 Nigerians

3) Preferences for terms: (Not all participants numbered every category. A lower average number indicates a higher preference, so 1.50 is the most popular choice.)

A non-grape derivative non-alcoholic beverage: 4,3,5,5,5,5 average= **4.5**

A grape derivative clearly non-alcoholic beverage: 3,3,4,4,2,3 average= **3.16**

A grape derivative beverage that could be alcoholic or non-alcoholic: 2,1,1,2,1,2,2 average= **1.57**

A grape derivative beverage that is clearly alcoholic: 1,1,2,1,1,1,4,1 average= **1.50**

A non-grape derivative beverage that is clearly alcoholic: 5,5,5,3,3,4,4 average= **4.14**

4) Other important factors:

'The decision above will depend on the sensitivity of the term in the language community concerning the type of alcoholic drinks they have and social problems of drunkenness' (Nigerian).

'The context, historical factors, cultural factors' (Nigerian).

'Church beliefs'.

'Muslim culture or target audience. In \*\*\*\* (language), we used several terms. It was acceptable to say that Jesus made wine, but not that he himself drank it at the last supper'.

'Attitude of churches to fermented drink'.

'Knowledge about "grape" fruits and when/why the drink was taken'.

What resources would you consult?

Commentaries, Translator's Handbook, Translator's Notes, local church leaders, Greek NT, cultural information, Bible dictionaries, Handbook of Bible Times, Mediterranean culture descriptions, historical information.

5) Advising arguing translators:

'Depends on circumstances! There is a big difference between southern and northern Nigeria. Many southern Nigerian languages have a word for "wine" which can include Fanta or Coca-Cola. So the issue can be avoided whether or not it is alcoholic'.

'Let's test acceptability'.

'Referring to Greek and biblical information, I would encourage them to use a word indicating it was fermented, with a footnote that there are different views on this'.

'To me, acceptability trumps. What will the majority of churches accept?'

'The context does not say that, because for it to be alcoholic it means that it went through the process of fermenting. There is no record of people being drunk after drinking it'.

'That indicates they both come from different denominations. They both need to understand what wine is all about, possible ways of translating it, then they should be allowed to make a choice'.

'I think it is more of a cultural issue as to whether taking wine is "spiritual" or not than a historical issue. I would point out that we need to be factual as to the historical object and keep from a theological discussion of the issue'.

'I would recommend that we do a study of all passages in NT that mention wine. I see this as a simple matter of fact to be clarified by historical/cultural research. It raises the question, though, of theological translation, translation

which interprets through the grid of an established theology. Some modern scholars say that theological interpretation is in fact necessary. I'm not sure of this'.

#### **4.3.2. Summary of trends – consultants formal questionnaire**

Six of the nine consultants were westerners. Six of seven who answered question two focused on alcoholic content as important, but in question three the whole group was essentially equal on whether the term should clearly indicate that it was alcoholic or just optionally indicate it. Question three shows that consultants clearly favoured translating a grape derivative beverage over a non-grape beverage. Acceptability among the target language was seen by many as important. Historical accuracy was important being mentioned six times throughout the questionnaire. Five of six respondents to question four cited local cultural and religious beliefs as important in deciding a term for *oinos*.

#### **4.4. Conclusions and implications**

The following are conclusions drawn from the informal survey and the formal questionnaires. A majority of translators, including translators from moderationist denominations, thought the beverage at Cana was non-alcoholic. A majority of consultants thought it was alcoholic. The diversity and polarity of answers indicates that a genuine controversy exists. The conflict raises the question: Should *oinos* in John chapter two be translated as clearly showing alcoholic content, clearly showing no alcoholic content, or using a term that can mean either?

Historical accuracy, acceptability, theological consistency, textual evidence and scientific fact were all referenced by various participants as important factors in their reasoning. Internal textual evidence was important to the majority. Historical accuracy was referenced, but not clearly defined. Acceptability by the target language community was given high priority by some. Others thought that it would be theologically inconsistent with Jesus' righteous nature to produce large quantities of alcohol for people who were already full of alcohol. Others thought that scientific facts regarding fermentation were an important factor.

Based on these empirical findings, any discussion of a solution to this issue will need to include detailed treatment of at least three of the above factors: historical accuracy, acceptability and textual evidence. These pertain most directly to translation. The theological and scientific factors can be viewed as subsets of these three factors or be dealt with outside of the translation issues.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Cultural imperialism and the controversy over Cana**

#### **5.1. Cultural and theological imperialism**

Differences between cultures or subcultures can become a major factor in a controversy. When two or more current cultures are involved, one of them is usually more influential or powerful because of factors like money, position or politics. When people from that culture impose their culture on the other, it is called cultural imperialism (Cambridge dictionaries online 10-09-2015, s.v. cultural imperialism). This can be accomplished directly through confrontation or through more passive means like education, books, music and movies (Lee 2015). The dominant culture may view their actions as positive, being motivated by an attitude of superiority mixed with a desire to help the less informed. Regardless, the result can be the imposition of the dominant culture without any reciprocal input, often to the detriment of the subordinate culture. The imposition of the dominant culture's attitudes is often successful not because they are actually superior, but because they are being expressed more frequently and in a more potent manner.

### **5.1.1. *Competing cultural theologies***

At present, there are different theologies competing for dominance in different cultural arenas. Western theology, that is, theology developed over centuries in the western cultural grid, has enjoyed a long period of dominance in many places around the world. This has coincided with the dominance of the western church numerically, economically and educationally. In recent decades, those spheres of dominance have begun to shift. The 'Church of the South' (South America, Africa and Asia) has numerically surpassed the western church. For the first time in centuries, the majority of Christians are not in western countries (Jenkins 2006:1-2). Likewise, seminary education is becoming more common in countries outside the west and many non-western churches are becoming more indigenously operated and funded.

In the context of these shifts, the question is being raised: is western theology the only way to understand gospel truth? Must we look at the Bible through a western cultural grid to understand it properly? In many cases, non-western cultures are closer to biblical culture and have better insights into the meaning of a biblical text. To insist that non-western countries adopt western cultural and theological views is tantamount to cultural and theological imperialism. That is, the western church telling others what they should believe and how they should believe it.

### **5.1.2. *An example of cultural and theological imperialism***

A good, but extreme, example of cultural and theological imperialism can be seen in the exchange between the Episcopal Church (American Anglican) and the Nigerian Anglican Archbishop, Peter J. Akinola. The Episcopal Church, in step with American cultural trends, chose to bless homosexual marriage and homosexual priests. Nigeria does not have the same cultural dynamic and Archbishop Akinola views the issue from a different theological grid. He maintains that the Bible teaches that homosexuality is a sin. Feeling strong pressure from the American and UK churches to change his stance, he retorts, 'This arrogance, this imperial tendency, should stop for God's sake' (Polgreen and Goodstein 2006). From the same article,

Bishop Martyn Minns, the rector of Truro Church in Fairfax, Va....said  
Archbishop Akinola was motivated by a conviction that the Anglican

Communion must change its colonial-era leadership structure and mentality. “He doesn’t want to be the man; he just no longer wants to be the boy,” Bishop Minns said. “He wants to be treated as an equal leader, with equal respect”.

In the context of the *oinos* translation controversy, nobody should be looking down on others for their differing cultural or theological assumptions.

### **5.1.3. Subtle cultural and theological imperialism**

Cultural imperialism is a strong term that can denote premeditated intent to dominate. At the other end of the spectrum is a much more subtle form of cultural imperialism. In this form, there is no premeditated intent and the domination is subtle.

I am reluctant to use the term cultural imperialism to describe Bible translation consultants, because most of my experiences over seventeen years in Nigeria have shown the consultants there to be even-handed with the *oinos* and other issues. For example, chapter four shows us that all the consultants believe the Cana beverage was alcoholic, but most of the translations used a term that did not indicate alcohol. This seems to show that even though consultants were convinced that it was alcohol and recommended using a term to reflect that, they allowed the teams to make their own choice on a term to use. Thus, any use of the term ‘cultural imperialism’ hereafter refers to its most subtle form.

In Nigeria, it has been my experience that most teams use Translator’s Notes and Translator’s Handbook found in TW5 to guide their translation decisions. These resources for the book of John were produced by westerners. It has also been my observation that a majority of the consultants working in Nigeria are westerners who were trained using these resources. With all or most of the inputs being western, it seems logical to ask whether western cultural assumptions might be influencing or even dominating some of the translation decisions being made. I am not saying that western input is bad or that westerners are intentionally trying to dominate, but when there is such homogeneity of input, it is bound to happen. This could lead to a subtle form of cultural dominance or imperialism.

Consultants may, as a result of their training and cultural influences, confidently believe something that seems completely obvious to them, but is not so obvious to others. As an example, we will now look at comments by four consultants who did some work in Nigeria.

## **5.2. Interviews with four consultants**

I asked four very experienced western consultants working in Nigeria whether they thought Jesus turned the water into alcohol or not. The following are the answers each of the four consultants gave:

- 1) 'It is obvious! Grapes naturally have it in them to become wine!'
- 2) 'It was definitely wine. The context of the passage indicates so, though it was diluted with water'.
- 3) 'It is obvious by the statement that the master of ceremony says! If there was no alcohol, there was no miracle! If they could have used just water, they would have! Jesus made some good alcohol and people got smashed!'
- 4) 'The statements that the master of the banquet says make it pretty obvious. The good wine would have been the wine with plenty of alcohol. After everybody was drunk, they could not have tasted whether the later wine was lower quality'.

### **5.2.1. Analysis of four consultant comments**

These were very brief, informal interviews and likely do not reflect what these consultants would say to a translation team. However, they are illustrative of how something can seem clear from one cultural or theological perspective when to others it is not. I will now point out what I see as the logical fallacies in their statements.

In the first statement, the consultant is talking about the natural process of fermentation, but there was no time between Jesus' miracle and the tasting of the

wine. Fermentation takes time. Either Jesus made it alcohol, or he did not. In the second statement, the consultant says that Jesus' wine was diluted with water. Diluting wine with two, three or four parts water is a well-documented practice from antiquity (Carson 1991:1056; Trail 1981:2183) However, there is nothing in the passage to indicate whether the wine was diluted or not. In response to comment three, it is no less of a miracle to change water into grape juice than wine. Also, Jesus did not promote getting 'smashed', which is American slang meaning 'to get really drunk'. Drunkenness is condemned in the Old and New Testaments (Prov. 23:20-21, 29-35; Is. 28:1; Rom. 13:13; Gal. 5:19, 21; Eph. 5:18).

### **5.2.2. *The four key phrases of the banquet manager***

The remaining consultant comments have to do with what the banquet manager says. In John 2:10 he says, 'Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now' (NIV).

Concerning the issue at hand, there is little within the banquet manager's statement to debate except the meaning of the four phrases: 'choice wine', 'cheaper wine', 'best (wine)' and 'too much to drink'.

The consultants' comments three and four both indicate that the quality of an alcohol is based on its alcoholic content. They say, 'Jesus made some good alcohol and people got smashed!' and 'The good wine would have been the wine with plenty of alcohol'. The Jewish religion looked down on intoxication and people of that area practiced watering down their wine, so it is clear that they did not prize high alcohol content. It is more likely that the master of the banquet is referring to the quality of the wine as determined by its purity (lack of floating material or dregs), aroma and taste, which is how modern western connoisseurs judge wines (Hartung 1999:2). This is similar to what the Translator's Reference Translation (2003:68) used, 'poorer (tasting/quality) // inferior/cheaper} wine'. The Greek word *kalos* translated 'good' and 'best' in this passage simply means 'free from defects, fine, precious' (Louw and Nida 1988, s.v. *kalos*; Trail 1981:2,380). Therefore, the phrases 'choice wine',

‘cheaper wine’ and ‘best (wine)’ should all be looked at without reference to alcoholic content.

The fourth comment, ‘after the guests have had too much to drink’ (NIV), sounds suspiciously like getting drunk. Looking at NIV, KJV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, TEV, CEV, NLT, ESV, JB, REB and NAB, only NIV puts it this way. The rest of these translations use terms like ‘freely drunk’ and ‘had their fill’, which do not carry the connotations of drunkenness that the NIV has.

The Greek word in this phrase, *methusthosin*, most often means ‘get drunk’ (Louw and Nida 1988, s.v. *methuskomai*), but only the God’s Word Translation puts it that way. (Interestingly, God’s Word Translation is considered a Lutheran (LCMS) translation (Bible Gateway 2015), and the LCMS holds a moderationist viewpoint (LCMS 2015, s.v. alcohol). The scholarly translators of all of the other translations mentioned above must have felt that the meaning was closer to ‘being full’ or ‘satisfied’ rather than ‘being drunk’, or they were de-emphasizing drunkenness to avoid a negative reaction by their readers.

The Calvinistic reformers had the former opinion. Their 1599 Geneva Bible (2006:1061), which was ‘the Bible of many reformers as well as Shakespeare, John Bunyan, Cromwell’s army, the Puritan Pilgrims... and even King James himself’ (Metzger 2001:66), uses the phrase ‘have well drunk’ and the footnote published in 1599 indicates it did not mean intoxicated, but only that they had enough.

DA Carson (1991:1056) and others (Trail 1981:2399) disagree saying that *methusko* here clearly means get ‘inebriated’, which means being drunk. Either Carson and the others are wrong and drunkenness is not communicated and there is no subsequent need to emphasize alcohol in this passage, or they are right and all of the scholars from the above mentioned translations felt that it was prudent to de-emphasize drunkenness presumably for acceptability reasons. If this is true, then there is no reason why vernacular translators cannot de-emphasize the alcohol content in the same passage for acceptability reasons as long as it does not violate accepted Bible translation principles.

### **5.2.3. A Nigerian banquet manager illustration**

To put the banquet manager's comments into a Nigerian context, I interviewed several Nigerians and asked for their response to the following scenario. I said, 'The organizer at one of your wedding feasts first sets out zobo (a cheap, local non-alcoholic drink made from flower sepals and calyces), then after the guests have eaten and drunk their fill, he puts out a hundred cases of Maltina (arguably the most prestigious non-alcoholic drink you can offer a guest in Nigeria)'. Every one of them answered basically the same, 'Why did he put out the inferior drink first? Everybody knows you put the good drinks out first!' This sounds almost identical to the comment that the master of the banquet at Cana made. Note that there was no alcohol involved. Stomachs just get full and taste buds get saturated and dulled with much eating and drinking whether there is alcoholic content or not, so the best should be served first (Keener 1993:2,653; Morris 1995:382).

### **5.2.4. Conclusions about Cana and consultant comments**

Based on the above analysis, there is no clear contextual evidence that what Jesus produced was alcoholic or non-alcoholic. That leaves the entire argument to rest on the translation of the Greek word *oinos*. None of the consultants based their confident opinions on that factor. They based it on what their understanding of the context was. My point is not to condemn these or any consultants, but to encourage all consultants to be careful about the assumptions they make, especially when controversial issues are involved. Three of the four consultants said the answer was 'obvious', but upon closer investigation there was nothing obvious about it. I believe that these consultants may have based their answers on their own western cultural assumptions bolstered by western exegetical resources and may have not realized how their own culture and theology were affecting their view.

## **5.3. The Good Samaritan's wine**

To further illustrate this point, we will look at the wine used in Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Alcohol has become such an important part of western culture that westerners often assume that it is the focus regarding the wine

in this story as well. When the Good Samaritan pours wine on the man's wounds, westerners automatically assume he did so because of the antiseptic properties of the alcohol in the wine. Many commentaries and resources say this (Blight 2008:13,303). Westerners often make this assumption because of a multi-generational use of alcohol to clean wounds. It has become a part of the culture, so it seems obvious to westerners. Did the first century Jews share in that knowledge? They did not. A quick look at medical history shows that germ theory and alcohol as antiseptic was not popularized until the nineteenth century (Antisepsis, 2015).

It is true that centuries before Christ, wine was used as an antiseptic by Hippocrates (Antisepsis, 2015) and later by Celsus in the first century AD (McGarry 2009:562), but its lack of mention as a wound cleaner in the detailed lists of medicinal uses for wine by second century BC Cato and first century AD Pliny speak loudly that it was not popularized (Plinius, A.D. 77: book 23; Roman wine making, 2012). In the second century AD, the Roman Galen used wine as an antiseptic, but that was primarily among gladiators. Furthermore, the alcohol content in wine is too low to make it a good antiseptic. Recent modern science has found that the antiseptic properties of wine are found in components other than the alcohol, like malvoside and oenoside (Kruszelnicki 2006).

The idea that alcohol is good as an antiseptic would have been lost on Jesus' first century audience. Did Jesus mention wine for the sake of later audiences? Perhaps, but it is widely accepted that Jesus was communicating to his first century audience in ways that they would understand. Then why does he mention wine? It was well known at that time that wounds do not heal well with dirt left in them. The wound needed to be cleaned and the dirt floated out with a clean liquid. The road that the Good Samaritan and the victim travelled was long, hot and devoid of water sources. Perhaps the Samaritan had finished drinking all his water. Wine is a clean liquid. This was a story Jesus made up. He could easily have said that the man cleaned his wounds with water, but he says wine. Why? Perhaps it was to emphasize the extent of the charity of the Samaritan toward the victim. Wine was more expensive than water. The average passer-by might not have been willing to use his limited water supply much less his wine for such a 'trivial' task. The rest of

the story bears this out and shows that the Samaritan did not spare any expense to take care of this stranger. In this interpretation, the main point regarding the liquid was not its alcoholic content, as most westerners automatically assume, but rather the ability of the liquid to float the dirt out and the fact that it cost him a little something extra to use.

#### **5.4. Conclusions about cultural and theological imperialism**

A consultant operating under western cultural assumptions may feel the need in these and other passages of Scripture to emphasize the alcoholic content of the wine, which is not really a relevant point. What may seem 'obvious' from a consultant's cultural standpoint may in fact not be true at all. Consultants need to be aware of their cultural and theological assumptions and be willing to question them when dealing with controversial (and all) topics. When consultants give confident opinions that are based on their own cultural and theological assumptions, they are guilty of subtle cultural and theological imperialism. Fortunately, Nigerian translation teams seem confident enough to not just do what the consultant suggests, but to think through what will be best for their audience.

## Chapter 6

### A model for consultants to follow

#### 6.1. General principles for consultants handling controversies

This chapter is a practical guide to approaching controversies. The first part is general in nature. The second part is specific to translating *oinos* in the northern Nigerian context. This chapter synthesizes much of the rest of this paper, especially the lessons learned in chapter two, into practical steps and advice.

Few people enjoy getting stuck in the middle of a controversy. Wilbert R. Shenk (Smalley 1991:xii-xiii) says,

From the beginning the Bible societies eschewed controversy and forged guidelines designed to minimize conflict with various Christian traditions and to maximize cooperation in the translation, production and distribution of the Christian Scriptures.

Even so, the Bible translation consultant often has to deal with issues that can be controversial. The following are some general guidelines that consultants can follow in handling a controversy:

**6.1.1. Acknowledge the controversy and the consultant's neutral role**

The consultant must first acknowledge the controversy. This seems simple, but some consultants would rather ignore a controversy and just move on with the translation. Like it or not, conflict resolution is part of the consultant's job (Barnwell 2005: 303; 357; 1,114; 1,211). He is the neutral facilitator between the parties and does not take a side. He works to build a positive, trusting relationship between the parties, to clarify issues, to narrow differences by finding points of agreement, to establish communication, to clarify misperceptions, to deal with strong emotions and to build the trust necessary for cooperative problem solving. He 'initiates progress toward their own resolution of issues in a dispute' (LaMothe 2015).

**6.1.2. Be aware of own culture and its influence**

The consultant must exercise an awareness of his own cultural attitudes toward the issue, and he must avoid 'undue influence from his own culture' (Hesselgrave 1991:188). For example, western countries are for the most part alcohol drinking cultures. Alcohol consumption is a big part of many of these cultures and has been for centuries. Temperance movements have also been a big part of many western cultures (Levine 2015:2). The consultant needs to pause and consider whether his own drinking or temperance culture is affecting his judgement on this issue.

**6.1.3. Be aware of personal feelings on the issue**

Some consultants become emotionally invested in controversies. Sometimes it is because of their closeness to the issue at hand. By just bringing up the issue, they become agitated or defensive. When emotions become involved at that level, it becomes difficult for the consultant to deal with an issue in a detached and academic manner. When emotions enter in, it becomes more difficult to listen to all parties involved and learn their point of view. Consultants should make a strong effort to separate their personal feelings from the issue.

**6.1.4. Don't try to solve the controversy – be an impartial mediator**

Real controversies are often not easily solved. Some of them have been going on for centuries and are still not resolved. A consultant should resist the temptation to

try to fix everything. A consultant best fills his role in a controversy when he mediates for the rival factions of the controversy and helps them arrive at a solution that will at least partially satisfy all major parties involved. As Dr Wayne Grudem (Poythress and Grudem 2004:287) says,

At any point where theological differences are at stake or where heated arguments are being generated over the implications of biblical texts, translators must avoid prematurely deciding the issue.

**6.1.5. Address the issues of stakeholders and powerbrokers**

Stakeholders are people who have an interest in the Bible translation project. They are interested in the outcome and may be interested in the process as well. Power-brokers are people who have various amounts of influence and control over the translation. A stakeholder who is a powerbroker can be a wonderful ally to the project. However, if alienated, he can become a serious detriment. One translation team in Nigeria failed to properly deal with some controversial issues and a stakeholder-powerbroker took control of the project and effectively side-lined the whole translation team. In any controversy, find out who the stakeholders and powerbrokers are and make sure they are involved in the Bible translation process and are adequately getting their concerns addressed.

**6.1.6. Be careful about judging motives and making accusations**

When controversies are involved, it is tempting to judge motives as impure, for instance, thinking that somebody holds a position for some reason other than for improving the translation. For example, 'He is only saying that because he likes to drink alcohol'. This kind of judging motives can be unscriptural and usually does not help resolve the conflict (1 Corinthians 4:5; Matthew 7:1).

**6.1.7. Focus on accepted Bible translation principles**

The solution to a Bible translation controversy can often be found by focussing on basic Bible translation principles. Following the guidelines in books like Dr Katharine Barnwell's *Bible Translation* (2007) for coming to an accurate, natural, clear and

acceptable translation will often help the translation team and consultant come to a sound decision regarding a controversy. Mark Strauss says,

We must ... set out clearly the goals, methods, and philosophy of Bible translation and then draw conclusions based on these, rather than on our abhorrence for certain cultural tendencies (Scorgie et al. 2003:136).

Rather than focussing on scoring points in the debate, the consultant should focus on translation principles accepted by the sponsoring organization.

## **6.2. Principles for consultants handling the *oinos* controversy**

The translator's and consultant's goal is to produce a Bible translation that is accurate, clear, natural, and some would add acceptable. We will now apply these four requirements to the question at hand – how *oinos* should be translated. One would hope that a single simple solution would present itself, but what we find instead is a range of acceptable options, some better than others, that the translation community can choose from.

### **6.2.1 Review Translator's Workplace resources**

According to personal communication with Bible translation leaders in Nigeria, most translators and consultants refer regularly to Translator's Workplace 5 (TW5) to determine some approved options for accurate translation.

A search of TW5 resources reveals that only a few of them address the topic of translating *oinos* in John 2. William Hendrickson (Trail 1981:2182) and others find no good reason to suppose that *oinos* is anything but fermented grape juice. The IVP Background Commentary (Keener 1993:2653) and D.A. Carson (1991:1056) say wine at that time of year in Israel was alcoholic and that it was diluted with water. Carson goes on to say that calling *oinos* grape juice is 'intrinsically silly' and that inebriation, which by definition is drunkenness (Merriam-Webster 2015, s.v. inebriation), was involved at the Cana wedding prior to the miracle. Louw and Nida (1988, s.v. *oinos*) say that *oinos* was fermented grape juice and specifically address

the grape juice issue. Albert Barnes (2007:2386) as cited in Exegetical Helps can be understood to mean that translating *oinos* as grape juice is an option. All TW5 resources agree it was a grape derivative beverage and most say it was fermented.

Louw and Nida suggest that translation options can include a local term, a borrowed term, or a descriptive phrase for wine. They say 'palm wine' can be used, especially if it is a cover term for all kinds of wine.

If a descriptive phrase is used, it would need to not be too long or cumbersome. As Dr Katharine Barnwell (2007:705) says about unknown ideas, 'Think what is important about the meaning in the context. Is the main point clear? ... Avoid long descriptions which distract the reader from the main point of the passage'. *Oinos* is used three times in John 2:10. If a long descriptive phrase is used, the verse would become unbearably cumbersome. The main point of this passage according to John 2:11 and TW5's Questions for Testing Translations (Stutzman 2004:15,128) is not fermentation or the alcoholic content, but rather that Jesus performed a miracle, that the disciples realized that he had power from God and they believed in him.

### **6.2.2 Historical accuracy**

Accuracy is paramount in Bible translation. It can be approached from several angles. We will consider historical, literary, linguistic and translational accuracy.

In section 4.3.1, several consultants mentioned that the term used to translate *oinos* would need to be historically accurate. According to Dr Katharine Barnwell (2007:86),

The Bible is a historical document. The books of the Bible were written down at specific times in history for people of a certain culture. It would be wrong to rewrite the Bible as if it were written in a different time and for a different people.

For example, when Matthew 21:19 says that Jesus cursed a fig tree and it withered, the Nigerian translator does not have the option of changing the type of tree to a mango or guava tree, which are common in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, palm wine and grain beer are common forms of alcohol, but they are not historically accurate, because they are made from things other than grapes. The only way these terms could be used and remain historically accurate is if they were general terms that included grape derivative wine in their meanings.

Chapter five of this paper makes it clear that there is no contextual evidence that what Jesus produced was unquestionably non-alcoholic or alcoholic. It is true that if Jesus produced what was usually available at that time of year, it would probably have been alcoholic. However, that is an assumption, not a stated historical fact. Therefore, the translator and consultant are not bound by the strictures of historical accuracy to render it one way or the other in this passage. They have some freedom to choose.

If an alcoholic term is chosen, it would be appropriate to add a historically factual footnote that when wine was consumed it was diluted with up to four parts water to one part alcohol.

### **6.2.3 *Literary accuracy***

Dr Ernst Wendland (2004:165) speaks of the iconicity of Scripture as referring to the Bible's 'characteristic imagery' and 'cultural symbols' among other things. He calls vineyards and wine 'important biblical archetypes' (2004:173) and describes archetypes as 'the basic building blocks of human conception and imagination' (2004:167). Wine made from grapes is a part of this imagery and these symbols found throughout the Old and New Testaments in passages that speak about grapes, vines and vineyards. In Revelation 19:15, stomping grapes is used as a picture of God's wrath. In Matthew 9:17, Mark 2:22 and Luke 5:37, grape wine is used as a picture of the old and new covenant. In Matthew 21:33-4, Mark 12:1-9 and Luke 20:9-16, the vineyard is used as the backdrop to a story that shows the unfaithfulness of the Jewish people. In the Last Supper, grape wine is a symbol of Jesus' blood. Jesus calls himself the 'vine' and his heavenly Father the 'vine dresser'. To change the historical fact that this was a grape derivative to something like palm wine or grain beer removes it from this literary connectivity. Literary accuracy would suggest using a term connected with grapes.

#### **6.2.4 Linguistic accuracy – componential analysis**

Many Greek words do not have an exact equivalent in other languages. Translators are often forced to choose a word or phrase that is close but not exact. By doing a componential analysis of a word, the important components can be identified and maintained in the translation. Components that are less important can be left off if necessary for naturalness and clarity purposes as long as the main, focal meaning is left intact.

The following is my componential analysis of wine in the context of this passage: [+liquid] [+grapes] [+celebratory] [+alcohol/fermentation]. Another analyst might add or delete components in this list and they might prioritize them differently. I placed highest priority components to the left in the list and lower priority to the right. My reasoning for this list and its prioritization is as follows: The liquid component is non-negotiable. The grape component (including vine and vineyard) factors in thematically with hundreds of other Scriptures and with historical accuracy. The venue of the miracle was a wedding and thus it was a celebratory beverage. Assuming that the beverage was alcoholic (and as we have seen this is debated) I placed alcohol in the lowest priority slot. Alcohol is the by-product of fermentation and the cause of intoxication. As demonstrated in chapter five, neither intoxication nor alcohol are in focus in this passage. The fact that wine was often diluted two, three or four to one with water (see 5.2.1 above) shows that high alcoholic content was not a priority for first century Jews. For these reasons it received a lower priority.

The translator should be encouraged to use the natural and clear word or short descriptive phrase in his language that has the most of these components of meaning beginning from the left and moving to the right.

Using this method, we find beer and palm wine to be low priority options because they miss 'grape', which is one of the highest priority components of meaning. Patrick Rosendall (personal communication), SIL Translation Coordinator in Nigeria, says, 'Connotative features of words are just as much a part of their componential meaning as the physical attributes'. If language communities have positive or

negative connotations attached to the translation of a particular word or phrase, like *oinos*, these should be considered. However, connotative features may or may not dictate the final outcome of how a word or phrase is translated when weightier theological issues are at stake.

### **6.2.5 *Literalness, transliteration and controversy***

Accuracy and literalness have sometimes been tied together. However, as Brunn (2013:49) says, ‘...increased literalness does not necessarily equate to increased faithfulness and accuracy’. In fact, often just the opposite is true. Just because something appears to literally render the original, does not mean that it accurately communicates the author’s intended meaning. In the last two decades there has been a renewed debate about this topic that is sometimes called ‘the formal equivalence vs. functional equivalence debate’. ESV has successfully tapped into this debate and used literalness as a selling point for its Bible version calling itself an ‘essentially literal translation’ (ESV 2008:9). While literalness and formal equivalence have their place in Bible translation, they are not the ideal for the first Bible translation in a language. I mention this because the temptation for the translator or consultant in the midst of a controversy might be to retreat to literalness just to spare themselves the work of thinking through the issue. If that is the case, then going the literal route may be wrong.

However, there is some merit in remaining literal in the midst of a controversy. Transliteration is perhaps the most literal form of translation. There is no attempt to interpret the meaning or represent the meaning in local language terms. The word in the source language is simply adopted and changed to fit the linguistic patterns of the language. For example, in chapter four of this paper the word ‘iwaynu’ was mentioned as a word used to translate *oinos* in a local Nigerian translation. ‘iwaynu’ is a transliteration of the English word ‘wine’. English is the national language. The ‘i’ at the beginning and the ‘u’ at the end are linguistically required for nouns, as is similarly the case with many African languages.

There is a precedent for transliterating in the context of controversy. Baptism is a controversial issue. Should people be sprinkled or submersed? There are strong

opinions on both sides. In 1827 in Serampore, India, Anglicans and others complained because Baptists were translating the Greek word *baptizo* with a meaning that clearly indicated submersing the person beneath the water. Anglicans do not practice submersion. Some translators listened to the request and searched for an alternative. Eventually they chose what most English Bibles had done through the centuries to avoid the controversy. They transliterated the Greek. In English, the word 'baptism' is an anglicized transliteration of the Greek word 'baptisma'. In Serampore some translators applied the rules of each local language to transliterate the Greek word. Each denomination could inject into the transliterated word the meaning that they felt was correct. However, some translators refused to transliterate, so two different versions of some translations arose (Smalley 1991:51).

The problem with 'iwaynu' is that it is transliterated from English instead of from the original Greek. In order to transliterate following the Serampore model, Nigerian languages would need to transliterate the Greek word *oinos*. However, there is precedence for Nigerians transliterating from languages other than the original. Many Nigerian Bible translators transliterate names of people, places and items from local trade languages into their local language. Fulfulde, the fourth largest language in Nigeria and a language I worked on, transliterates from the northern trade language, Hausa, the names of people, places and things like the precious stones in Revelation chapter twenty-one (Alkawal Kesal 2010:639). Even though there is some precedence, there is one very limiting factor. As with 'baptism' when it was first introduced into English, 'iwaynu' (and presumably other transliterated words) probably has no inherent meaning and may take time for people to understand.

### **6.2.6 Naturalness, clarity and acceptability**

Whatever term is chosen, it must be natural and clear in the local language. It must also be acceptable. Acceptability was given a high level of importance in section 4.3.1 by consultants. Acceptability is important because if the translation is done in a manner that is unacceptable to the audience, they will likely not read it. Dr David J. Bosch (1999:85) said, '...Translations are heard, read, received or rejected in part because of pre-conceptions'. Acceptability has a lot to do with what people are used to, so the translator and consultant should find out what that is and respect it.

Audiences may be influenced by local, trade or national languages. Sometimes there are cultural or theological issues that must be taken into consideration when translating.

In northern Nigeria the dominant trade language is Hausa. Three versions of the Hausa Bible use the term *ruwan anab/inabi* 'water of grapes' when translating *oinos*. (*Inab* is Arabic for 'grape'). The Hausa Bible is accepted as authoritative, so deviation from it by minority language translations can create acceptability problems for the translation. This does not mean that the Hausa should be followed at all times, but when controversy is involved and there are options, it seems prudent for the translator and consultant to strongly consider this factor.

In the Nigerian Fulfulde New Testament (Alkawal Kesal 2010:227-228) the translators followed the Hausa and used the neutral term *ndiyam inabojam* 'water of grapes' (or just *inabojam* because *inab-* means grape and *-jam* indicates liquid) to translate *oinos* in all places where intoxication was not in focus. Where intoxication was in focus, they used *njaru* 'intoxicating drink'. They had the option of using *ndiyam inabojam giilotoodam* 'water of grapes that makes one stumble', which simply adds the feature of 'intoxicating' to the usual term. *Njaru* was used because it was more concise, communicated clearly and naturally, and had the added benefit of including all alcoholic drinks, which many see as the intent in those passages (Bean 2008:1,057; Graham 2008:49,937; Greenlee 2008:65,376; Thomas 2008:2,186; Travis 1974:8,467).

Using 'water of grapes' may be one of the best solutions. It is concise, it maintains the historically accurate connection to grapes, it fits within expectations created by Hausa and dozens of other Nigerian languages and it is a neutral term that can mean either alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Bob Carter, consultant for multiple Nigerian languages, says, 'All the groups I have worked with in Nigeria are now using the equivalent of 'water/liquid-of grape' ...The word for 'water/liquid' is not specifically non-alcoholic' (personal communication).

Since grapes are not native to Nigeria, a picture and a brief glossary entry can help clarify what they are and that there are differing opinions. For example the glossary

entry could read, 'Grapes are a fruit that grows on a vine. The Old and New Testaments talk about grapevines more than any other plant. People in the Bible have a long history of using the juice from this fruit. This juice ferments and becomes alcohol. There is a debate about whether all references to this juice refer to intoxicating drink or not'. This gives an honest presentation of the facts, acknowledges the debate, and allows local Christians to decide what meaning they will attribute to *oinos* in its various contexts.

Before closing this chapter it is imperative to once again emphasize the importance of acceptability. How does a translator determine the acceptability of what he translated? It can only be done through vigorous testing. The testing must be done among a wide cross-section of the intended audience and it must be done in a variety of manners as illustrated in Dr Katharine Barnwell's (2007:3,236) list. Had the team in section 3.1.1 done proper testing, they would have discovered that their term for *oinos* was unacceptable and their printed Bibles would not have sat in storage for decades unsold.

### **6.3 Chapter conclusion**

Consultants should not seek to unnecessarily constrict translation teams. Rather, they should be willing to look more broadly and help them find solutions that will work for their whole audience and still maintain accepted Bible translation principles. Each language community has its own blend of needs regarding controversial issues. The consultant should be prepared to be flexible in meeting the unique needs of each community. This means that his translation solutions may be different for different communities. Regarding translating *oinos*, he should remain aware of the options outlined above, encourage the team to vigorously test what they choose, and be willing to consider more options that may result as long as they fit accepted Bible translation criteria.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

This paper began by pointing out how controversial Bible translation can be in general and how time and resources can be wasted when consultants and translators do not handle controversies well. Chapter two looked at four Bible translation controversies in some detail with an eye toward learning what causes controversies and how to best handle them. Chapter three introduced the specific controversy in Nigeria regarding how to translate the Greek word *oinos* and showed the history, complexity and serious nature of the controversy.

Chapter four quantified the controversy in Nigeria with empirical research that showed that there was indeed a strong difference of opinion between most of the translators and the consultants who were surveyed regarding this issue. It gave quantitative and qualitative results that helped refine the key issues as perceived by some translators and consultants in Nigeria.

Chapter five made the observation that most of the input that Nigerian translators were getting on this issue was from culturally western sources and it asked the question whether mild forms of cultural imperialism were involved. It showed that western culture has shaped western views on alcohol in Scripture, and that western

consultants unnecessarily emphasize alcohol content in the two passages mentioned. The conclusion was that although consultants, as well as TW5 resources, encouraged translators to emphasize alcoholic content, the translation teams did not translate it that way and the consultants respected their choices.

Chapter six offered suggestions for how consultants might handle controversy in general and then moved into offering suggestions for handling the specific controversy over translating *oinos*. The latter section applied accepted Bible translation principles to the topic and came up with several viable options for translating *oinos* in the northern Nigerian context.

This paper looks with some depth at the issues involved in translating *oinos* in the New Testament with particular attention to The Wedding at Cana and the parable of the Good Samaritan. Similar analyses need to be done on other Scriptures in the New and Old Testaments and a more comprehensive list of options and guidelines needs to be developed.

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