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Poeticizing the Psalter in an African Language

From Poetry into Poetry, with Special Reference to Psalm 13 – "How long, O Lord…!?"

Abstract: This study illustrates the application of a literary methodology to the analysis and translation of biblical poetry. The aim is twofold: first and foundational, to reveal salient aspects of the beauty and power of Psalm 13 in the original Hebrew; and second, to experiment with different methods of communicating the original meaning of the psalmist's passionate prayer with respect to lyric form, content, and function in Chichewa, a major Bantu language. After a thorough examination of the principal structural and stylistic features of the biblical text, a typical lament psalm, several published and unpublished Chewa translations are critically discussed. The ultimate purpose is, as the title of this paper suggests, to produce an acceptable, functionally equivalent, poetic version of the Hebrew text in the vernacular. In conclusion, the main principles illustrated in this study are summarized in an effort to encourage more dynamic, idiomatic, indeed melodic translations of the Scriptures in local languages, where circumstances allow. "How long" must so many reader-hearers suffer under the burden of a less than communicative version of the Psalter in their mother tongue?

Keywords: Psalms, Literary Analysis, Biblical Poetry, Poetic Translation, Bantu Language

Overview: From a Literary-Structural Analysis to a LiFE Translation

The purpose of this study is to utilize Psalm 13, "the shortest of the prayers for help in the Psalter,"[1] to illustrate a "literary-structural" (LS) type of text analysis and then to apply the results to a "literary functional equivalence" (LiFE) manner of translation.[2] With respect to the source (biblical) document, a LS analysis seeks, first of all, to determine the text's main structural contours in terms of its sequence of primary *structural* units (poetic stanzas) and their inter-relationships; and secondly, to identify the text's significant *literary* attributes—that is, its major *artistic* (formal) and *rhetorical* (functional) features.[3] The literary character and quality of the source text (ST), once analytically determined, is then synthesized or reproduced along with its "meaning" (content and intent), to the extent possible, by implementing a LiFE mode of translation. This is a

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1 Mays, "Psalms", 77. Mays goes on to observe that "in spite of its brevity, the psalm is a virtual paradigm of the essential features of such prayers" (ibid.: loc. cit.).

2 This mode of discourse analysis and approach to translation are both amply explained and illustrated in Wendland, "Survey", and in Wendland, "Studies". Consequently, there is no need to go into details regarding these methodologies here.

3 These are "communicative clues," which are "features built into the text for the purpose of guiding the audience to the intended interpretation…textual features which vary in degree of subtlety and which are perceived to be particularly important for the intended meaning" (Hatim, "Translation", 112). "Meaning" includes both semantic content and pragmatic intent.

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5 The Hebrew text is that of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia: with Westminster Hebrew Morphology* (electronic *Logos* edition); Stuttgart, German Bible Society; Glenside PA, Westminster Seminary, 2001. For easier reference the verse sequence of English Bible has been adopted, rather than the Hebrew.

6 "The psalm speaks *to* God, using the name that God has given the people of God as self-revelation" (Mays, "Psalms", 78).

7 "The apparent logical contradiction between 'how long' and 'always' actually makes psychological sense"—that is, "from the speaker's tormented perspective" (Alter, "Psalms", 38). The extension of time is highlighted by the placement of these temporal expressions at the beginning and end of the line.

8 "The hiding of God's face is an anthropomorphic expression for alienation and curse (cf. 30:7; 44:24; 88:14). The shining of God's face signifies blessing (cf. Num 6:25-26; Pss 4:6; 31:16; 67:1; 80:3, 7, 19)" (VanGemeren, "Psalms", 140). "The hiding of God's face does not refer to His essential being but to his activity" (Westermann, "Psalms", 71)—that is, God's visible actions in the world (or in this case, non-action) in relation to humanity, individual or corporate.

9 The sense of the term עֵצוֹת is debated by commentators; I agree with those who preserve the parallelism with v. 2b and interpret the meaning as involving intense "pain" or "anguish" (Craigie, "Psalms", 140; deClaissé-Walford, "Psalms", 158; Terrien, "Psalms", 159-160; contra Goldingay, "Psalms", 203).

10 "Inside," more precisely: "inner self" (נֶפֶשׁ) pairs with "heart" (לֵבָב) in the next line to embrace the psalmist's entire psychological being and mental state—both of which are intimately linked to his spiritual relationship with Yahweh.

11 "Some LXX MSS add the expected 'and by night,' which also turns the line into another neat 4—4" (Goldingay, "Psalms", 203), "but this is most likely a reflexive addition based on the common couplet 'day and night'" (deClaissé-Walford, "Psalms", 159; cf. Craigie, "Psalms", 140).

12 The verb "be exalted over" may be construed metonymically as to "defeat," or "be victorious over," someone. While it is possible to interpret "my enemy" (אֹיְבִי) as a reference to death (Craigie, "Psalms", 141-142; cf. v. 4a), "it is preferable to understand the enemies as [all] human beings who are opposed to the psalmist and his God" (deClaissé-Walford, "Psalms", 160).

13 "The verb implies far more than visual perception—a look of...concern" (Terrien, "Psalms", 160).

14 "The second verb directly follows the first without 'and,' conveying a sense of urgency that ignores politeness" (Goldingay, "Psalms", 207).

15 The Hiphil of the Hebrew verb אור, "when used elsewhere with 'eyes' as object, refers to the law of God giving moral enlightenment (cf. Ps. 19:8), to God the creator giving literal eyesight to all people (cf. Pr. 29:13), and to God giving encouragement to his people (cf. Ezr. 9:8). Here the psalmist pictures himself as being on the verge of death. His eyes are falling shut and, if God does not intervene soon, he will 'fall asleep' for good" (study note from the *New English Translation* [NET], accessed in *Paratext* 7.5).

16 Literally, "I sleep death" – "The intransitive verb may take an object in a complementary sense" (deClaissé-Walford, "Psalms", 159; cf. Goldingay, "Psalms", 203, who prefers "acc. of place"). "The antithesis between light for the eyes and the implied darkness of death is striking, and the poet uses a jolting elliptical form, 'lest I sleep death' (not 'the sleep of death')..." (Alter, "Psalms", 38).

17 "As elsewhere in the supplications, the pain of imagined death is made more bitter by the imagined shadenfreude of the enemy, who will delight in this death" (Alter, "Psalms", 38).

18 The verb מוֹט here "refers to dying...it suggests falling down to the ground and not getting up again" (Goldingay, "Psalms", 208).

19 In this context, the continuative sense of the perfect verb "may be better represented in English by 'I am trusting' or 'I always trust'" (Bratcher & Reyburn, "Psalms", 125).

20 "This is one of the passages in the Old Testament in which 'unfailing love' (*chesed*) is parallel with 'salvation' (*yeshuah*). If a distinction is to be made between them, then 'unfailing love' is displayed in God's acts of 'salvation'" (Harmon, "Psalms", 163).

21 The verb form of v. 5b is a jussive, while that of v. 6a is a cohortative; together they express the psalmist's strong vow-like resolve to thankfully worship Yahweh. Terrien suggests, somewhat imaginatively, "that the whole choir will invite him to compose a song of praise to God" ("Psalms", 161).

22 Interpreting the initial conjunctive particle כִּי as having an asseverative sense.

23 "Translations have 'acted bountifully' for gâmal, but the verb means to do all that should be done; it is the context that decides whether the action is positive or negative" (Goldingay, "Psalms", 204; cf. Craigie, "Psalms", 140; Bratcher & Reyburn, "Psalms", 126). VanGemeren ("Psalms", 142) suggests this as a translation for vv. 5-6: "But since I trust in your unfailing love, may my heart rejoice in your salvation—may I sing to the Lord, 'He has been good to me!'"

A Literary-Structural Summary of Psalm 13

Psalm 13 is a model Hebrew "lament" prayer—"the clearest, purest example of the genre."[24] It manifests the three prototypical functional ("speech-act") elements, one per stanza, in the expected order of occurrence, as noted in the preceding display: Stanza A = *Complaint* (vv. 1-2); Stanza B = *Petition* (vv. 3-4); Stanza C = Expression of *Trust* and *Praise*. Although relatively balanced in terms of lineation, the lexical rhythm is somewhat irregular,[25] and the psalm gradually gets shorter as it perceptually proceeds to a thematic *peak* (v. 5) and a final emotive *climax* (v. 6): A = 5 lines, 19 words (lexical units);[26] B = 4 lines, 15 words; C = 4 lines, 11 words. "The sections become steadily shorter as the supplant climbs step by step through questions and laments via fears and pleas to expressions of trust and praise."[27]

Except for the four reiterated complaint markers that emphatically begin the psalm ("How long?" – עַד־אָנָה),[28] the text features a sequence of formal and thematic *triads*, revealed most obviously in its three constituent stanzas and the three sequentially linked participants (or groups) that appear as focal agents or experiencers in the first stanza (A):[29]
- "you" (*Yahweh*) in v. 1 – God seemingly "ignores" the psalmist;
- "I" (the *psalmist*) in v. 2ab – he feels great pain/sorrow in his heart;
- "he," the psalmist's "*enemy*" (probably collective) in v. 2c – he "triumphs."

In stanza B, the psalmist responds with three prayerful commands: "look"—"answer"—"enlighten," which reflect the threefold personal focus that was revealed in the first stanza, that is, with respect to Yahweh (v. 3a), the psalmist himself (v. 3b), and his enemies (v. 4). These are accompanied by three motivational clauses introduced by the conjunction "lest" (פֶּן).[30] Finally in stanza C, three self-directed events characterize the psalmist's ultimate spiritual and religious state: "trust"—"rejoicing"—"singing," all of which result from the Lord's "steadfast love" (חֶסֶד), his "deliverance" (יְשׁוּעָה), and his "lavish goodness" (גָּמַל). The psalm's principal character, the LORD—the One to whom the psalmist prays and who is trusted to act on his behalf—is explicitly mentioned three times in the form of the revered covenantal name "Yahweh" (יְהוָה), namely, at the beginning of stanzas A and B, but near the close of stanza C and the psalm as a whole.

Larger patterns of lexical, semantic, and syntactic correspondence help to further establish the formal boundaries of the three stanzas and to create cohesion within them.[31] The sequence of rhetorical questions clearly delineates stanza A. In stanza B, the imperatives immediately dominate (v. 3), as mentioned above, along with their motivation (v. 4). In stanza C we find a conclusive chiastic arrangement where two perfect verb forms ("I have trusted...he has dealt fully well") enclose a pair of imperatival imperfects, specifically, a jussive ("may [my heart] rejoice") and a cohortative form ("let me sing"). More subtly then, we note a figurative reference to facial features that occurs near the opening of stanzas A and B: "hide your face" (1b) – "brighten my eyes" (3b), a type of disjunctive parallelism termed "aperture," while references to the psalmist's adversaries end both of these stanzas (vv. 2c, 4b; a feature termed "closure").[32] A pair of

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24 Brueggemann & Bellinger, "Psalms", 75. For a form-critical outline and overview, see Gerstenberger, "Psalms", 83-95.

25 Terrien, "Psalms", 158. "Lexical rhythm" has reference, not to strict poetic meter, but to the relative balance in the occurrence of accented word units within a sequence of poetic lines (cola).

26 Hebrew lexical items joined by a "hyphen" (*maqqeph*) in the Masoretic Text are counted as one poetic "word."

27 Goldingay, "Psalms", 204.

28 One might argue that yet another (5th) occurrence is implicit at the onset of line 2b.

29 "The agenda of distress is threefold: trouble with God, with self, and with others. ... Though the three are distinct, they are not separable. Together they compose the full account of trouble that comes upon faith. It is theological, personal, and social. ... In the order of prayer, the trouble with God comes first, because that is what matters most to faith" (Mays, "Psalms", 78).

30 The second occurrence is left implicit (typical for poetry) in line 4b. These motivations form a chiastic, topically inclusive structure: (a) lest I sleep in death... – (b) lest my enemy should say... = (b') [lest] my foes should rejoice – (a') because I shake and fall.

31 We recall that there were no verse numbers in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts and little, if any formatting at all. Thus, various formal linguistic and literary devices within the text itself were needed to help demarcate the psalm audibly into thematic-structural units, especially for the vast majority who could only access it aurally.

32 For a fuller discussion and illustration of these structural markers, see Wendland, "Survey", 194-204; "Studies", chs. 1-2; "Translating", 125-128.

contrastive "reason" (כִּי) clauses conclude stanzas B and C: "*because* I fall down" (v. 4b) – "*because* he (YHWH) has acted fully for me" (6b). The close of stanza B is linked to the beginning of stanza C (tail-head linkage) through contrastive uses of the same verb (גָּמַל): foes rejoice – my heart rejoices. And finally, we have another instance of paired structural "closure" markers in the psalm's very last word עָלָי (Yahweh –"for me"), which dramatically contrasts with its sense at the end of v. 2 and stanza A (enemy—"over me")!

A hypothetical thematic arrangement in the form of a chiastic inversion (anastrophe) might also be proposed for Psalm 13 as follows:[33]

    A. Yahweh is absent, unresponsive (1)
        B. The psalmist's "heart" is pained and sorrowful (2ab)
            C. The enemy appears to be triumphant (2c)
                D. The psalmist appeals to Yahweh, "my God," for a response (3a)

                D' The psalmist prays for the "light" of life in the face of death (3b)
            C' The enemy prematurely boasts of his triumph (4)
        B' The psalmist's "heart" is trusting and joyful (5)
    A' Yahweh has responded bountifully (6)

This suggested organization thus highlights the psalmist's personal turning point in the middle of the text,[34] as he consciously turns to the Lord in prayer. From this perspective, element C' then is not an expression of doubt or despair, but rather a confident, almost ironic look into the future when the psalmist's enemies will have to "eat their words," as it were, due to an anticipated act of deliverance on the part of his God. In this understanding, the initial of וַאֲנִי v. 5 is not so much a contrast ("But I...") as it is a conclusion ("Thus I..."), as the psalmist prepares to profess his faith and make his personal vow (v. 6). The preceding is not proposed as being the dominant thematic-pragmatic arrangement of Psalm 13, which arguably moves progressively and sequentially to a climax in v. 6. Rather, the concentric structure subtly underlies and complements the predominant forward-moving development of the text, not only providing a more clearly defined midpoint, but in the process also demonstrating the artistic compositional skill of the prayerful poet.[35]

The Psalmist's Rhetorical Strategy

Being an essential part of Israel's long worship and liturgical tradition the individual psalms naturally give evidence of many typical features, such as:
–   conventionalized formal discourse patterns (genres),
–   syntactic structures (e.g., parallelism),
–   religious themes and motifs (e.g., the absent God versus the ever-present enemy),[36]
–   formulaic wordings (e.g., "How long...?").[37]

And yet, with few exceptions (e.g., Pss. 14 and 53), there is relatively little exact repetition between and among them.[38] In fact, one is impressed to observe how much diversity of form and content is manifested within the

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33 Adapted from Terrien, "The Psalms", 158-159.
34 There are 23 lexical units in vv. 1-3a (excluding the superscription) and 22 lexical units in vv. 3b-6. However, this symmetry is somewhat misleading due to the fact that the word units in the first half of the psalm tend to be longer, for example, five combinations formed by *maqqeph* as opposed to only two in the second half.
35 Broyles aptly comments ("Psalms", 87): "This psalm reveals an intricate, tightly knit structure that moves logically from one verse to the next. When we try to pick out one poetic line, we find it attached to every other line in the psalm."
36 "The psalmist finds himself torn between two poles. On the one side is the "Lord,' to whom he addresses his lament; on the other side is the 'enemy' (v 3c) who...was exalted and appeared to have the upper hand" (Craigie, "Psalms", 141).
37 See also Pss. 6:3, 35:17, 42:9, 79:5, 80:4, 89:46, and 90:13.
38 Where there is such close thematic and semantic correspondence between adjacent psalms, it may be employed as an argument that at one stage in their history of transmission, they existed together as one psalm, e.g., Pss. 42-43.

collection that the Psalter comprises. There are iterations and echoes of many other psalms to be found in Psalm 13 as well,[39] but none which manifested sufficient common stock that it would be regarded as a twin or duplicate. For example, for someone familiar with "book one" of the Psalter, the initial "How long...?" of Psalm 13 would undoubtedly call Psalm 6 to mind (cf. v. 3). To be sure, there are some patent similarities, such as the oppressive enemies on the scene (6:7, 8, 10), the extreme anguish of the psalmist (6:3, 6-7), and the appeal to Yahweh's *chesed* (6:4). On the other hand, we also note some clear differences, not the least of these being that in Psalm 6 it sounds as if the Lord has already acted on the psalmist's behalf (6:8-10).

The rhetorically persuasive, petitionary development of Psalm 13 is prefigured within the very arrangement characteristic of its genre as a "lament," or psalm of petition. Thus, the progression of poetic speech acts (each of which may be compounded) in this type of psalm is relatively fixed, with an opening *complaint* proceeding to a prayerful *appeal* that leads, somewhat surprisingly,[40] to some expression of *trust* in God, *hope* that he will respond, and frequently even a word of *thanks* and/or *praise* for an act of expected deliverance. It is important to recognize the anticipatory "rhetorical movement," or "structure of intensification,"[41] in these psalms of supplication, both implicit in the underlying generic organization, and actual in its textual manifestation: "These prayers...move, so that everything is different at the end from what it was at the beginning."[42] Yet on the other hand, from a religious, or spiritual perspective, and within a canon-critical conceptual framework, we must assume that "the trust so evident in the conclusion [of this psalm is] in fact the same trust that permitted the lament in the first place."[43]

Therefore, according to the larger pragmatic development of Psalm 13, I consider the initial lamentation (stanza A) to arise as a bold, assertive expression of fundamental faith[44]—a stylized example of persuasive prayer that employs this formulaic mode of speech simply as a rhetorical device to get God's attention, as it were, not as an articulation of the psalmist's doubts concerning the Lord's immediate covenantal presence or power to deliver.[45] This psalm teaches us that "even in the midst of the worst circumstances, it is still possible to talk to God—to have a relationship with him."[46] Certainly, his situation in life was dire, as the repeated "How long...?" in stanza A and reference to the possibility of "death" in stanza B would suggest

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39 Other prominent passages from the Hebrew Scriptures are also referenced or alluded to, for example, the Lord's "hiding his face" (i.e., punishment, or no response) as in Deut. 31:17—the contrast, "turning his face towards" (i.e., in blessing), as in Num. 6:26, which is similar to the Lord's "shining his face" on someone (cf. Ps. 13:3b). Harmon notes the intertextual connection of Ps. 13 with Num. 14:10-25, where "we have the same link made between 'How long?' and God's covenantal mercy (v. 5)" ("Psalms", 162).

40 A pragmatic "surprise" appears in the textual progression also for McCann, "Psalms", 95. McCann (ibid., 96-97) goes on to cite comments by James Mays on this apparent paradox within Psalm 13: "It speaks to God in complaint and praise, speaks out of the experience of forsakenness and of grace, of abandonment and salvation. ... Luther in his exposition of the psalm calls the mood of the prayer the 'state in which hope despairs, and yet despair hopes at the same time...' ... The agony and the ecstasy belong together as the secret of our identity"—that is, in, with, and under God.

41 Bratcher & Reyburn, "Psalms", 122; "This short poem, which begins with a cry of distress, soars to a song of praise to God. In six short verses the transformation has swiftly moved from suffering disaster to confident trust and thanksgiving" (ibid., loc. cit.). How did this happen? Through the interrelational (human—divine), transformative power of prayer (stanza B).

42 Brueggemann & Bellinger, "Psalms", 77. Thus, "...it is the power and transformative agency of YHWH that makes the dramatic movement possible. The issue finally is not literary or rhetorical but theological" (ibid., loc. cit.). All practitioners of a LS methodology must keep that fact firmly in mind!

43 Brueggemann & Bellinger, "Psalms", 77. "Prayer arises because God has first taken the initiative to call forth faith" (Mays, "Psalms", 78).

44 "It seems to be a paradox of hope and hopelessness" (Ross, "Laments", 139) only if the psalm ends with stanza A. But this is only the beginning, and the psalmist's faith is progressively picked up from here—by the very same Lord to whom he prays (stanza B) and in whom he trusts (stanza C).

45 In this understanding, the overt expression "will you forget" is the rhetorical equivalent of a more gentle, "why don't you *remember*," that is, *PLEASE act right now* to relieve and restore my covenantal relationship of fellowship with you. My interpretation thus contrasts with that of Terrien: "The poet accuses Yahweh...of not caring for him anymore" ("Psalms", 160; cf. also deClaissé-Walford, "Psalms", 160; Goldingay, "Psalms", 205).

46 Howard, "Psalm 88", 253. Furthermore, built into the beginning of such a lament is the forward-looking assumption of faith that "praise is the normal mode of life, and [the psalmist] wants to return to that mode" (ibid., 252).

(3b). But the fact that the psalmist feels close enough to call Yahweh "my God" (3a)[47] and seeks his "face" (1b)[48] would indicate that he believes that his Lord is right there on hand to act on his behalf to restore his health and well-being (to put the light of life back into his eyes!).[49]

The psalmist dynamically "mobilizes both the sense of sight and the sense of hearing"[50] as he initiates his compound petition in stanza B. There follows a subtle, implicitly expressed argument to motivate his appeal in verse 4. Thus, if the enemy turns out to dominate,[51] then not only has the psalmist been defeated, but also the God in whom he trusted is shown to be impotent—and this in full view of all "enemies," including the ungodly.[52] No such thought, however, lingers in his mind, but instead, he proceeds in dramatic fashion to emphatically underscore the strength of his faith in strophe C. He does this by verbally encouraging himself to begin rejoicing with songs of thankful praise to a God that is so amazingly good that his awaited act of deliverance may be viewed as having already been accomplished! Again reflecting the triadic structure that frames this psalm, we see in verses 5-6 a significant threefold faith perspective that serves as a model for believers of every age:[53] "Looking backwards, the psalmist acknowledges, *in your* hesed *I have trusted*. Of today, she confesses, *my heart rejoices in your salvation*. And tomorrow, she adds her vow that *she will sing to the Lord*."[54]

So how does literary-poetic *structure* relate to rhetorical *purpose* relate to biblical *theology* relate to personal *application*? I cannot improve upon the perceptive summary of James Mays:[55]

> The psalm leads those who read and pray it from protest and petition to praise; it holds all three together as if to teach that they cohere in the unity of prayer. There is a coherence that holds the apparently separate moments together. God is so much a God of blessing and salvation that one must speak of tribulation and terror as the absence of God. Yet God is so much the God of *hesed* that one must speak of God in the midst of tribulation and terror as the God of "my salvation."

Towards a *LiFE*-like, Musical Translation

A careful, comprehensive "analysis" of the biblical text, though time-consuming, is the essential first step in the basic translation process according to the familiar three-stage method proposed by Nida and Taber.[56] This is not only a linguistic fundamental, but it also serves to create an essential cognitive "frame of reference" that allow the authors to make second step of "transfer" to be effectively carried out, whereby the analyzed material in terms of meaningful form, content, and function is reconceptualized from the multi-faceted

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47 "The prayer is based on the belief that the lives of those who belong to God matter to God. ... The psalmist says 'my God' as part of the people of God" (Mays, "Psalms", 79).

48 This figurative usage may refer to some divine manifestation "in the secret sanctuary of his inner life" (Terrien, "Psalms", 159).

49 "The psalmist's problems with his enemies and with his own self are also God's problems" (deClaissé-Walford, "Psalms", 159). The point is that the psalmist was taking them directly to the only One who could resolve this crisis in his life (stanza B), and in the end, he is more than amply satisfied (stanza C).

50 Terrien, "Psalms", 160.

51 "There is no confession or statement of sin to suggest that the trial was a judgment deserved; the urgency of the psalmist's plea springs from a sense of profound anxiety, not penitence" (Craigie, "Psalms", 142).

52 Joy on the part of the enemies would result not only "in the fall of the godly but also in God's failure to be faithful to his covenant promises" (VanGemeren, "Psalms", 141). "It is this connection to God's reputation that provides an important context for the [psalmists'] bold prayers" (Ross, "Laments", 149).

53 This pertains to the issue of "theodicy" and the relation between a loving covenantal Lord and the suffering of those who love him: The theological basis of Psalm 13 presupposes "the deep conviction that God is not removed from suffering, but is intimately bound up with suffering—God is involved both with sufferers and also with the answer to suffering" (deClaissé, "Psalms", 163) in the lives of his saints.

54 deClaissé, "Psalms", 162; original italics and pronominal references. "The confidence which finally comes (v 6) is based primarily upon a change of attitude, not a change of physical well-being. ... And so the personal threat afflicting the body was countered by memory of past trust (v. 6a) and anticipation of future deliverance (v 6b)" (Craigie, "Psalms", 143).

55 Mays, "Psalms", 79.

56 Nida & Taber, "TAPOT", 33-34. For a more detailed method of text analysis and translation, with illustrations, see Wendland, "Studies", chs. 1-4.

"mental space" of the source language and culture, as evoked by the ST, into the closest corresponding mental space composite of the target language and culture.[57] This virtual framework of meaning, or "deverbalized mental representation,"[58] is then progressively "restructured,"[59] or formally re-expressed, in the TL using the most appropriate ("relevant"), functionally equivalent structural arrangements (genres) and literary (artistic and rhetorical) features available in view of the particular audience, communicative purpose (*Skopos*), and setting of transmission envisaged.[60]

The following outlines a practical exercise in translation that was carried out in joint consultation with the Chewa-speaking students of my seminary Psalms exegetical class.[61] It exemplifies some of the possibilities that a translator or translation team must consider and then choose from and try out during their work with a source text, in this case, Psalm 13. The various options are exemplified below in terms of four stages of dynamic development: (a) beginning with an old, but still popular, relatively literal, "missionary" version, (b) moving to a more modern "popular-language" translation, (c) pushing the literary register to approximate a popular lyric style in Chewa (*ndakatulo*), and (d) finally the ultimate, aiming for the creation of a hymned version in the vernacular, one that would be suitable for use in public worship. The translational options thus represent a continuum of goals and methods that range from the *literal* (with a focus on ST form) to the *literary* (with a focus on TT form). The overall challenge at each alternative is this: In view of the intended audience,[62] how can one best express the main formal, functional, and feeling-based communicative clues of the Hebrew ST (as noted in the prior analysis) in a contemporary African (Bantu) TL?

The old Chewa[63] translation of the Scriptures, entitled the *Buku Lopatulika* (BL, "Set-apart Book"), is a Protestant "missionary version"[64] that was first published as a complete Bible by the British & Foreign Bible Society in 1922.[65] Its rendition of Psalm 13 is given below, along with a relatively literal English back-translation. (A back-slash marks a line break due to the narrow dual column of print, while hyphens indicate words broken as a result of a right-hand margin justification procedure.)

1. Mudzandiiwala ciiwalire, Yehova,/ kufikira liti?	Will you continually be forgetting me, Jehovah,/ up until when?
Mudzandibisira ine nkhope yanu/ kufikira liti?	Will you hide from me your face/ up until when?
2. Ndidzacita uphungu m'moyo mwanga/ kufikira liti?	I will make counsel in my life/ up until when?
Pokhala ndi cisoni m'mtima mwa-/nga tsiku lonse?	Being with sadness in my/ heart the whole day?
Adzandiukira ine mdani wanga/ kufikira liti?	He will rise up against me, my enemy/ up until when?
3. Penyani, ndiyankheni, Yehova/ Mulungu wanga:	Look, answer me, Jehovah/ my God:
Penyetsani maso anga, kuti ndi-/ngagone tulo ta imfa;	Look carefully at my eyes, lest I/ sleep the sleep of death;
4. Kuti anganene mdani wanga,/ Ndamlaka;	Lest my enemy says,/ I've proven too powerful for him;
Ndipo angakondwere otsutsana nane/ posunthika ine.	And then those may rejoice who contend with me/ without being concerned over me.

57 For further discussion, see Wendland, "Survey", ch. 7.

58 The latter expression is derived from the "Interpretive Model" of Marianne Lederer ("Translation", 9-13).

59 Nida & Taber, ibid., loc. cit.

60 These are the practical, target-group focused translation parameters defined in so-called *Skopos* Theory (cf. Wendland, "Survey", 35-38, 60-62).

61 Lusaka Lutheran Seminary (Zambia), September to May, 2016. There are 15 second-year students in the class. During the first semester we surveyed the main poetic-religious genres found in the Psalter and the principal stylistic features of Hebrew poetry, as exemplified in the Psalms. In semester two, we study the basic principles of Bible translation and apply these to the evaluation of different English and vernacular versions as well as composing meaningful poetic translations of selected psalms in their respective mother-tongues. All students speak Chichewa as a first or second language so all important principles and procedures can be also discussed using that medium of communication.

62 This decision about "which audience" to translate for—the familiar question "for whom" (Nida & Taber, "TAPOT", 1)—must be based on thorough research and prior constituency testing, not merely on the preconceived opinion of project organizers and/or their sponsors (financers).

63 Chewa, technically *chi-Chewa*, is a Bantu language in the Nyasa Family (Guthrie Zone N) that is spoken as a first or second language by an estimated twenty million people in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and parts of South Africa.

64 A "missionary version" is a translation that was established, guided, directed, and heavily influenced by the philosophy and linguistic capabilities of expatriate mission personnel, in this case, pioneer church planters and teachers working in Malawi (then Nyasaland).

65 A corresponding Catholic Bible, *Malembo Oyera* (MO, "Pure Writings"), was published in 1966. For more historical background, see Wendland, "Buku Loyera", 20-26.

5. Koma ine ndakhulupira pa cifu-/ndo canu;	But as for me, I have hope in/ your mercy;
Mtima wanga udzakondwera naco/ cipulumutso canu:	My heart will be happy in/ your deliverance:
6. Ndidzayimbira Yehova,	I will sing unto Jehovah,
Pakuti anandicitira zokoma.	Because he has done pleasant things for me.

A brief evaluation of the BL version is as follows:
– The BL gives a fairly accurate picture of the verbal forms of the Hebrew text. This might be helpful for some purposes, e.g., for theological students, pastors preparing an exegetical study.
– The punctuation and formatting of the text on the printed page is problematic, making it very difficult to read, e.g., small print, narrow double columns, hyphenization, awkward line breaks, unhelpful use of the colon and semicolon.
– The translation is not demarcated into the three discourse units (stanzas) that appear to be indicated in the source text.
– "Yehova" is the transliteration employed to represent the Tetragrammaton, *YHWH*, which modern scholars feel is inaccurate; furthermore, it is found only in Protestant literature, not in Catholic religious material, which replaces it with "Yahve" (also in the MO).
– There are frequent examples of unnatural syntax, e.g., *Ndidzacita uphungu m'moyo mwanga* – "I will make counsel in my life" (v. 2a).
– Several examples of difficult or unintelligible expression also occur, e.g., *Penyetsani maso anga* – "Look carefully at my eyes" (v. 3b).
– Virtually the entire text is non-poetic; it could be reformatted as a prose paragraph, and the only distinguishing feature would be the awkward repetition, e.g., *kufikira liti* – "up until when."

The preceding translation may be compared (below) with the more recent interconfessional (Protestant-Catholic), "popular language" version, entitled the *Buku Loyera* (BY, "Pure Book"), which was published by the Bible Society of Malawi in 1998.[66]

1. Kodi mpaka liti, Inu Chauta?	Till when, O Lord?
Kodi mudzandiiwala mpaka/ muyaya?	Will you forget me till/ forever?
Kodi mudzandibisira nkhope/ yanu nthawi zonse?	Will you always hide your face/ from me?
2. Kodi ndizivutika m'maganizo mwanga mpaka liti?	Till when must I trouble myself in my thoughts?
Kodi ndiyenera kukhala ndi/ chisoni mumtima mwanga/ usana ndi usiku?	Should I remain with/ sorrow in my heart day and night?
Kodi mdani wanga/ azindipambana mpakampaka?	Must my enemy/ defeat me without fail?
3. Mundikumbukire ndipo/ mundiyankhe,	Remember me and/ answer me,
Inu Chauta, Mulungu wanga.	O Lord, my God.
Mundiwunikire kuti ndingagone tulo/ tofa nato.	Enlighten me lest I sleep/ the sleep of death.
4. Mdani wanga asati,/ "Ndampambana!"	My enemy must not say,/ "I've overcome him!"
Adani anga onse asakondwere/ poona kuti ndagwa.	All my enemies should not rejoice/ on seeing that I have fallen.
5. Koma ine ndimadalira chikondi/ chanu chosasinthika.	But as for me, I rely on your/ unchanging love.
Mtima wanga udzakondwera/ chifukwa mwandipulumutsa.	My heart will rejoice/ because you have saved me.
6. Ndidzaimbira Chauta,	I will sing unto the Lord,
popeza kuti wandichitira zabwino.	since he has done good things for me.

A brief evaluation of the BY version is as follows:
– The BY presents an accurate rendition of the essential content of the Hebrew text in natural Chewa style.

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66 The *Buku Loyera* was published in two distinct versions: *Catholic*, including the Deuterocanonical Books; *Protestant*, omitting the DC books. For information on the history, organization, and translation principles that guided the BY version, see Wendland, "Buku Loyera", 26-113. The Catholic Church has fully adopted the BY, whereas many Protestant churches have been reluctant to do so, criticizing it as a "Catholic Bible" that departs too freely from the verbal forms of the Hebrew text. Such groups favor traditional (familiar) wording over the communication of meaning in natural Chewa style.

–   To render the Tetragrammaton, the indigenous name of the Chewa Creator God, *Chauta*, is used.[67]
–   The text font is larger, hence more legible, and there is no hyphenization.
–   However, the narrow print columns necessitate frequent mid-line breaks (/), often in unnatural places.
–   While composed in acceptable (prosaic) Chewa style, the BY version is not really "poetic," nor does it evoke the rhetorical impact and aesthetic appeal of the original Hebrew psalm.

What might we do then to duplicate the stylistic quality of the ST in a more dynamic, oral-aural oriented manner that is recognizably "poetic" in Chewa? The following is a version that exemplifies a "genre-for-genre" representation of Psalm 13 in the poetic style known as *ndakatulo* lyric poetry.[68] This genre, selected after an extensive survey of Chewa oral and written poetry, is particularly accommodating as a model for rendering biblical poetry because it embraces a wide range of subjects (secular and religious), styles (with many sub-varieties), functions (from serious to humorous), emotions (from sadness to happiness), and media of transmission (silent reading, oral recitation, musical performance). Normally, a *ndakatulo* lyric is composed by an expert individual, but in the case of the sample below, I was the initial drafter of the poem, and my composition was subsequently revised and polished up in various respects by my students after both a written and an oral review. I have highlighted selected, mainly phonological poetic features in the Chewa text, its "sonority,"[69] for those who may wish to follow along.

1. **Haa**! Mwandiwala ine, In<u>uuu</u> Chauta!	*Haa!* You have forgotten me, <u>OO</u> Chauta!
Kodi mpaka liti mudzandikumbukira?	So till when will you remember me?
Mpaka liti mudzandibisira maso anu?	How long will you hide your eyes from me?
2. **Ah**, maganizo anga andiwawitsa n'thu!	*Ah*, my thoughts are truly paining me!
Kodi chisoni chidzaleka liti m'mtimamu,	When will sadness cease inside this heart,
inde, kundipweteketsa usana ndi usiku?	*yes indeed*, distressing me day and night?
Nawonso adani alipo, amandiyang'ana,	They too, enemies, are present, gazing at me,
mpaka li<u>iii</u>ti anthuwa adzandipambana?	how <u>looo</u>ng will those people overcome me?
3. **Ho**! ndapota nanu, Inu Mulungu wanga—	*Ho!* I'm begging you, O my God—
choonde, ndikumbukireni, mundiyanke.	*Pl<u>eee</u>ase*, remember me, answer me.
Ndiwalitseni maso, n'sagone tulo ta **bii**!	Brighten my eyes, let me not lie down in the sleep of *darkness!*
4. Mwamva adani akuti, "Tampamba na**di**!"	You have heard my enemies saying, "We've *completely* overcome him!"
Asakondwe poona kuti ndili pansi **pho**!	Let them not be happy seeing that I'm down *flat!* on the ground!
5. Koma chikondi chanucho chosasinthika	But that unchangeable love of yours
chili **pha**! mumtimamu, ndimachidalira.	is *full up!* in this heart, I'm relying on it.
Chimwemwe chili m'tsaya, mwalanditsa!	Joy is in (my) cheeks, you've rescued (me)!
6. Ndidzakuimbirani Inu Chauta osalekeza.	I will sing praises unto you O Chauta without ceasing.
Zoona, mumandichitira zabwino koposa!	Surely, you always do for me surpassing good!

The preceding rendering of Psalm 13 exemplifies a number of the common stylistic (artistic-rhetorical) characteristics of *ndakatulo* lyric poetry:
–   balanced line length in terms of words/syllables[70]

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67 The use of *Chauta* was not only a compromise between Catholic (*Yahve*) and Protestant (*Yehova*) preferences, it is also the closest natural vernacular equivalent of *YHWH*, being an ethnic Chewa-specific reference to the High-God that falls under the generic term *Mulungu* (equivalent to *El* or *Elohim*). For a detailed discussion of this significant translation issue, see Wendland, "Buku Loyera", 115-121.

68 For more discussion and exemplification of *ndakatulo* poetry, see Wendland, "Buku Loyera", 185-189; "Studies", ch. 7; "Translating", 330-336.

69 Landers, "Literary Translation", 100. "Sound is paramount to poets. ... Although not all poems (both translations and originals) that sound good are good, it's a pretty safe bet that a translation that sounds bad, is, well, bad" (ibid., loc. cit.). On the other hand, as a professional (secular) translator, Landers suggests that "most [literary] translators judge the success of a translation largely on the degree to which it 'doesn't read [sound] like a translation'" (ibid., 49).

70 Such interlineal balance is not a requirement of *ndakatulo* verse, but it is quite frequent.

- frequent internal and line-end rhyme
- variable syntax (normal: S-V-O) to create focus, emphasis, rhythm
- abundant use of demonstrative, emphatic, concordial, and pronominal affixes to create a distinct tempo, fill out poetic lines, and create alliteration
- occasional use of ideophones, emotive exclamations, and intensifying particles (in boldface)
- various types of adjacent and displaced reiteration
- a preference for direct speech, including vocatives, emphasizers, etc.
- idioms (joys is in the cheeks, v. 5) and figurative language (e.g., "sleep of darkness" = death!, v. 3)
- condensation (e.g., *n'thu* for *ndithu*, v. 2) and ellipsis (e.g., *mwa[ndi]landitsa*, v. 5)
- rhetorical questions (already present in the ST!)
- phonesthetic appeal (alliteration, assonance, punning, rhyme, vowel elongation)

This translation also features several other notable departures in form from the original, for example: changing the initial rhetorical questions of verses 1 and 2 into emphatic assertions, which then highlight the following questions; lengthening several verses through repetition for the sake of lineal balance (e.g., v. 2); changing the figure of "face" in v. 1 to "eyes" to match up with the psalmist's appeal in v. 3; reducing the word pair in v. 4 to one term ("enemies"). Other formal modifications for artistic and rhetorical purposes should be evident from the back-translation. This Chewa lyric version needs to be tested more widely of course to assess how successful it will be in fulfilling its main function (*Skopos*) in view of its primary audience—that is, to make available a more dynamic, oratorical rendition of the psalm, especially for church youth groups, who often request such Scripture-based materials both for communal study and performance.

There is one further—the ultimate—stage which might be considered during the translation process, and that is, to compose a version that may be actually sung in public worship, whether as a more formal "hymn" or a more flexible choir "chorus." For either of these purposes, often a mixed, literal-literary type of rendering is required since the main challenge is to smoothly wed the words of the text to some newly composed, or already existing repeated melody in an aesthetically appropriate manner. The following is the text of one musical version that emerged from our Psalms class study and workshop. It was composed by Mr. Chilembwe Banda, who conformed his Chewa version, a paraphrase of the original, to the melody of "Rock of Ages."[71] The hyphens in the Chewa text below indicate syllable breaks that correspond with the notes of the familiar hymn tune, while double vowels roughly indicate a prolonged syllable, and an apostrophe indicates a syllabic nasal (the result of an ellipsized vowel).

Ko-di m'dzaa-ndi-i-wa-laa,	Say, will you forget me
mpa-ka lii-ti, Cha-u-taa?	for how long, O Chauta?
Mu-dza-ndii-bi-si-ra 'nee,	Will you hide from me
nkho-pe yaa-nu, Cha-u-taa?	your face, O Chauta?
Ndi-dza-chii-ta ma-ntha 'nee,	I will have fear, I will,
ntha-wi zoo-nse m'mo-yo-wuu.	all the time of this life.
Mu-ndi-oo-ne, Cha-u-taa,	Have a look at me, O Chauta,
M'lu-ngu waa-nga ndi-nu-dii.	my God you are indeed.
Tse-gu-lee-ni ma-so 'nee,	Open up your eyes to me,
ku-ti ii-ne ndi-sa-fee,	so I do not die,
ku-ti mdaa-ni wa-nga-yoo,	so that enemy of mine,

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71 From my Psalms class of 15 students, nine of them felt confident enough to try and compose a hymn based on Psalm 13 within our time limit of one week (this was after a week of exegetical and poetic study of this psalm). Seven students composed in the Chewa language, one in Tumbuka, and another in Tonga. Five students also composed their own melody to accompany their text, while the others matched their texts to familiar English or Chewa hymn tunes. All of these students did an excellent job and were rated highly by their peers (the six students who chose not to compose). However, I selected Mr. Banda's composition for an illustration because even those readers who are not familiar with Chewa, knowing the familiar melody of "Rock of Ages," can test the vernacular text out by singing the words. To hear his two renditions, access at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZA-glP2FP5c and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yka0ygfNGnU

a-dzi-wee wa-le-phe-raa!

Ko-ma ii-ne nda-pe-zaa,
chi-fu-ndoo cha Cha-u-taa.
Mti-ma waa-nga wa-ko-ndwaa,
nda-pe-zaa mo-yo wi-naa.
Mwa-ndi-puu-lu-mu-tsa 'nee,
ndi-dza-iimba mo-ko-ndwaa!

should know he's failed!

But as for me, I've found,
the mercy of Chauta.
My heart rejoices,
I've found another life.
You have surely saved me,
I will sing so joyfully!

Conclusion: From Poetry to Poetry—What Have We Learned?

The principal aim of this study was to illustrate the application of a literary-oriented methodology to the analysis and translation of biblical poetry, with Psalm 13 being used as the example. A careful examination of the Hebrew text revealed a rather simple structure on the surface, but a much more elaborate poetic style was exposed underneath in terms of artistic appeal and rhetorical power, both of which served to underscore different aspects of the psalmist's fervent appeal to the Lord for deliverance. So this is the first thing we can learn: Every serious translator must pay due diligence to the original text so that s/he will stand firmly enough on the semantic-pragmatic foundation of the source in order to produce an *accurate* (ST focus) and *acceptable* (TT focus) rendering.[72] Trying to accomplish this on the basis of a derived text—another translation in a language of wider communication (LWC), such as English—is going to be much more difficult. In short, the lesson is encapsulated in the Renaissance catch-phrase *ad fontes*: "back to the sources"[73]—the ideal beginning of any literary translation of Scripture must be the text in the language of original composition, whether Hebrew or Greek.

What then are we to do with the information that we have derived from our initial analytical study? As suggested, this depends on a host of factors that pertain to the target circumstances of use—who, when, where, why—for what purpose? The present study exemplified four possible situations and associated translations: a) a more literal, traditional, and hence familiar version for public worship in more formal church settings; b) an idiomatic "popular-language" version for congregations that prefer the Scriptures to speak to them in a more natural way; c) a dynamic "literary functional equivalence" rendering that models a vernacular genre which might be more popular with the younger generation, for a mass-media presentation, or for personal reflection; and finally, d) a musical version that permits the biblical text to be communally sung, emotively, experienced, more easily memorized, and as a result, probably engaged with more fully both cognitively and emotively. When carried out with care and correctness, any type of Bible translation can serve a beneficial religious purpose in relation to some specific setting. However, the primary intention of this essay is to encourage a more *poetic* translation of the Psalms in the languages of Africa.[74] This is because in my experience as a Bible translation consultant and facilitator I have seen and heard so few examples that consistently and extensively reflect what Nida and Taber refer to as "the genius" of the target language—namely, the mother tongue of a majority of local Scripture consumers.[75]

72 The relationship between "accuracy" and "acceptability" is referred to by the Functionalist translation theorist Christiane Nord as "intertextual coherence," which she defines as "the relationship between the source and target text within the framework of a *Skopos*-oriented translation (also 'fidelity'). The important point is that intertextual coherence should exists between source and target text, while the form it takes depends both on the translator's interpretation of the source text and the translation" (Nord, "Translating", 139).
73 This phrase is also found in the translation of Psalm 42:1 in the Latin Vulgate: "In the same way that the stag is drawn *to sources* of water, so is my soul drawn to you, O God."
74 This is because in all of the Bantu languages, at least, that I know of, the various poetic forms found in the Scriptures—from the intense personal debates that permeate Job to the evocative love lyrics of Song of Songs—can normally be matched functionally by well-known poetic forms in the vernacular.
75 "Rather than bemoan the lack of some feature in a language, one must respect the features of the receptor language and exploit the potentialities of the language to the greatest possible extent" (Nida & Taber, "TAPOT", 4).

To be sure, there are generally a number of significant barriers present that can prevent or derail such an ambitious venture: a lack of time and resources allocated for the project, insufficient prior research in the published literature and traditional orature of the target language, a lack of education on the part of the local constituency (they simply don't know about an idiomatic option), or the sheer inability of the translation team to fulfill such a commission.[76] Then, we must not forget the challenge of the overall formal, semantic, pragmatic, expressive, and affective richness of the source text itself, which we might do well to remind ourselves of here at the end. We will do this via a summary of Psalm 13's structure, message, and spiritual significance penned by the 19th century Lutheran theologian, Franz Delitzsch:[77]

> The Psalm consists of...three groups of decreasing magnitude. A long deep sigh is followed, as from a relieved breast, by an already much more gentle and half calm prayer, and this again by the believing joy which anticipates the certainty of being answered. This song as it were casts up constantly lessening waves, until it becomes still as the seas when smooth as a mirror, and the only motion discernable as last is that of the joyous ripple of calm repose.

In any case, for those capable translators who are willing to put forth the effort, and who have the mandate to do so, it will turn out to be a rewarding communicative endeavor, undoubtedly also an edifying personal experience, both for them and the members of their future audiences.[78] To return then to the initial query of the psalmist, now in a much different context: *How long* will people need to wait before they can read and hear lyric translations of the Psalms that truly reflect the familiar sounds and natural stylistics of African languages? But perhaps the question should rather be this: how long *should* they wait? The position of this paper is simply, *as long as it takes*—but hopefully *the sooner, the better!*

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76 For example, a professional practitioner recommends that the translator of poetry must have "a poetic sensitivity...[which] encompasses, but is not limited to, an appreciation for nuance, sonority, metaphor and simile, allusion; the ability to read between and above the lines; flexibility; and ultimately, humility" (Landers, "Literary Translation", 99). "Why humility? Because even our best efforts will never succeed in capturing in all its grandeur the richness of the original" (ibid., 8).

77 Cited in VanGemeren, "Psalms", 139.

78 "Only *literary* translation lets one consistently share in the creative process. Here alone does the translator experience the aesthetic joys of working with great literature, of recreating in a new language a work that would otherwise remain beyond reach—effectively 'in code'..." (Landers, "Literary Translation", 5; original italics).

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