

Significance of women's involvement in re-translating the Chinese Bible

Wong, Jenny

DOI:

[10.17462/para.2022.01.13](https://doi.org/10.17462/para.2022.01.13)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution (CC BY)

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Wong, J 2022, 'Significance of women's involvement in re-translating the Chinese Bible', *Parallèles*, vol. 34, no. 1, pp. 154-167. <https://doi.org/10.17462/para.2022.01.13>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

Significance of women's involvement in (re-)translating the Chinese Bible

Jenny Wong

University of Birmingham, UK

Abstract

The history of the translation of the Chinese Bible can be traced back to 1822, when the Chinese version of the Holy Scripture was first published in Selangor, India by Baptist missionary Joshua Marshman (Wylie, 1867). Since then, translation of Chinese Bibles has continued under the auspices of Bible societies such as the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Worldwide Bible Society, the Catholic Church, as well as under the leadership of individual translators such as Rev. Lu Chen Chung and independent scholar Feng Xiang. The involvement of women in the translating and editing process has also evolved from male-dominated teams to a more gender-inclusive, collaborative setting. This study discusses the importance of women's involvement in the translation process by first tracing how women's role in churches were undermined in Hong Kong due to interpretations based on the different translations of the Bible into Chinese. The paper also aims to shed light on how the gender-related scriptures have been treated, by way of comparative textual analyses of biblical annotations across various Chinese Bibles. It can be seen that when women editors and translators are placed in truly leadership roles, women-related issues can be addressed more effectively.

Keywords

Female Bible translators, hermeneutics, Chinese Bible translations, female church leadership, feminist theology

1. Background

Hong Kong likes to pride itself on equal opportunities among men and women. According to the latest survey (2020) by the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, women holding leadership positions such as managers or administrators, for instance, rose from 20 % to 35 % between 1991 and 2019 (Census and Statistics Department, 2020). But such improvement in opportunities for women in the secular world is not replicated in churches. According to the latest figures by the Church Renewal Movement in 2014, of the 1,114 senior pastors and ordained ministers in Hong Kong, 246 or 22 % are women, a slight improvement from 20 % in 2009, while males account for 78 %, (878 ministers). The obstacles to the ordination of women, according to the report by the Hong Kong Women Christian Council¹, can be divided into four areas: 1) From the socio-cultural perspective, Hong Kong being a traditional Chinese society, it is still male-dominated, which in turn bears on the involvement of women in church ministry. 2) The present church structure does not have a system for approving women's ordination. 3) Some churches base their decisions on the needs of the churches and the nature of ministry. For instance, women can have certain roles and lead worship, but they may not preach from the pulpit. In the training of theology students, feminist theology is insufficiently taught. 4) Women need to take into consideration more factors than men in being church leaders, for example how to strike a balance between the roles of pastor, wife and mother.

The experiences which I collected from personal contacts suggest a fifth obstacle: differences in interpretation of biblical texts, sometimes caused by the translations of the Bible into Chinese, have often become a cause for the refusal of female ordination and for the subordination of women in churches in Hong Kong. This led me to consider the importance of women's involvement in the translation of the Bible, especially with respect to passages in the scriptures relating to the role of women. In an open letter entitled "can Lutheran churches ordain female pastors?", the late Reverend Wu Ming Chieh from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hong Kong (Wong, 2001, p. 48) pointed out the three passages generally used to oppose female ordination: 1) what the husband is to the bride, Christ is to the church (1 Cor 11:3-16) and, therefore, to ordain a woman would imply that the woman takes up the role of husband and father in the family; moreover, since "the Christian minister is Christ's representative, this implies a spiritual authority in the church that belongs to the man."; 2) "women should remain silent in the churches." (1 Cor 14:34-36), and 3) "For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner." (1 Tim 2: 8-15) The above excerpts from the scriptures appear to point to the subordination of woman to man owing to the Order of Creation, to women's alleged weakness in facing temptations, and that they are being ordered by Paul to remain silent.

The above interpretation did not come as a surprise but rather, confirmed my observation of women's role in churches, on which the interpretation of gender-related biblical verses had an impact. As early as 2007, when I attended a wedding at a very traditional church in Hong Kong, what the male church leader said in his wedding sermon struck me. He opined, based on Genesis 2:18 which says "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him", that the role of women is to help or assist the man, as the Chinese translation of the excerpt suggests. According to him, deep in their hearts men need women to support their decisions and, therefore, his advice was as follows: "I always told the church sisters, wise women should pretend to be stupid." His comments again did not come as a surprise, as this

¹ This is according to the annual report published by Hong Kong Christian Women Council, 1995.

is also demonstrative of the traditional Confucian view of women's derogatory role as well².

While the letters of the apostle Paul are commonly cited by churches in the Chinese community to justify women's subordinate role in church, what is not cited as argument for empowering women is Paul's consistency in his hermeneutics. His interpretation is a form of allegorical reading, which is not only reflected in 1 Timothy 2:13-14, but also in his figurative interpretation of the figures of Hagar and Sarah. In 1 Timothy 2:13-14, Paul's theology of women's subordination is based on the creation order, for Adam is created first, and also derived from the sin of woman, for she is the one who was deceived. In Galatians 4:22-26, Paul took Hagar and Sarah figuratively – Hagar represents the covenant from Mount Sinai, which is in slavery, while Sarah stands for the free Jerusalem.

2. Revisiting the Hebrew Bible and its Chinese translation

For the purpose of textual analysis in this paper, rather than studying the Chinese translations of Pauline literature to investigate its impact on women's role, I would like to focus on the Old Testament, which provides the foundational texts allegorically interpreted by Paul in the New Testament. Two issues that primarily lead to Paul's conclusions are: is man created before woman? And is woman the one who was deceived and, hence, the sinner? In what follows, I will draw on Old Testament scholar Phyllis Trible's interpretation of a number of gender-related scriptures and compare them with different Chinese Bible versions in an attempt to understand their impact on Chinese readers.

Phyllis Trible's feminist approach in *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (1978) overturned the traditional thinking of women's subordination, because it is Chapter 2 of Genesis, not Chapter 1, that played a critical role in the church's positioning on gender equality. According to Trible, the literal meaning of 'Adam' in Hebrew language is 'earthling', which is a genderless term. In other words, in Genesis, 'man' should not be understood as 'male' until God took 'its' rib to form a companion, Eve. If Adam is an 'earthling' in the beginning rather than the 'male', then 1 Tim 2: 8-15 does not pose any issue: "For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (NIV). Indeed, according to Genesis 1:27, "[NIV] God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Thus, the male and female were created at the same time. Is woman the one being deceived, and thus a sinner? Phyllis Trible goes on to show Adam's presence when the serpent approached Eve, as the scripture is careful to point out that the man is with her (Trible, 1978, p. 113) and plural verb forms are used in the dialogue between the woman and the serpent. Adam remained silent and passive, and his responsibility is obvious.

Trible further elaborates on the original meaning of 'helper' in Genesis 2:18, a word which, in Hebrew, designates a 'companion'. Consequently, woman is not an 'assistant' but one who corresponds to the other half on an equal basis. That said, being a helper does not necessarily imply inferiority; the use of 'helping' in Psalms 33:20 and other biblical verses is synonymous to 'protecting' and even 'saving'.

How is 'helper' translated and interpreted in the Chinese context? Where translations in modern English range from 'helper' to the more neutral term 'companion', the Chinese translations have not evolved significantly over the years. Thus, the new translation of Genesis

² Confucianism is often associated with oppressing women, including the teaching that women should be subordinate to their fathers during childhood, husbands during marriage, or sons during widowhood. One of the direct references to women in the Analects is "Women and servants are hard to deal with" (Analects 17.25).

2:18 in the Chinese New Version (CNV) published by Tien Dao Publishing House (which later established Worldwide Bible Society) in 1992 reads: “我要為他造個和他相配的幫手” [I will make him an *assistant* corresponding to him]. The translation of this excerpt in the Revised Chinese Union Version (RCUV) is exactly the same as the earlier Chinese Union Version (CUV), the canonized Bible translation into Chinese published in 1919: “我要為他造一個配偶幫助他” [I will make him a *spouse* to help him]. The Chinese Catholic Studium Biblicum reads: “我要給他造個與他相稱的助手” [I will make him an *assistant* compatible to him]. Lu Chen Chung's version reads: “我要為他造個幫助者做他的配偶” [I will make a *helper* as his spouse]. The above Chinese translations reveal that terms such as 幫手 [helper] or 助手 [assistant] 幫助者 [one who helps], if used singly without further elaboration, lead to assumptions about the inferiority of women. It is only the RCUV/CUV version that adopts a more neutral translation of the excerpt: “我要為他造一個配偶幫助他” [spouse who helps him]. To sum up, it comes as no surprise that such translations led the Chinese elder in the church to bring his understanding from a patriarchal ideology into the interpretation.

3. Source text analysis of Biblical commentaries

While the translation of ‘help’ in Genesis 2:18 across the various Chinese versions of the Bible has remained fairly the same for decades and, hence, a source for gender-biased interpretations, certain devotional and study Bibles in the market strive to provide extensive annotations to explain the role of women to provide a balanced viewpoint. I will base my analysis on Nord's translation-oriented source text Analysis (T.O.S.T.A.) to analyze the *skopos* (purpose) and intended readership at the macro level. Since the notion of “functional equivalence” proposed by Eugene Nida, consultant of several Bible Societies including United Bible Societies, has had a significant impact on the study of Bible translations especially in the functional approach by scholars such as Katherina Reiß and Hans Vermeer. Nida himself regularly drew on examples from Bible translation to illustrate his views on equivalence but other Bible translators, including those working into Chinese, have frequently used this approach (Peng, 1992, pp. 1-16).

Peng Kuo-wei, editor-in-chief and project consultant of the Chinese Union Version Study Bible, opined that the first thing to do when embarking on a translation of the Bible into Chinese should be to decide which is the intended readership, in order to determine the *skopos* and the most suitable translation strategy. He reckoned that, from a functionalist viewpoint, it is necessary to clarify the *skopos* as either documentary or instrumental, before a definition of faithfulness can be reached (Peng, 2019b, p. 252). In Nord's view, documentary translation aims at producing in the target language a record of a communicative interaction in which a source-culture sender communicates with a source-culture audience via the source text, under source-culture conditions. Instrumental translation, on the other hand, aims at producing in the target language an instrument for a new communicative interaction between the source-culture sender and a target-culture audience, using the source text as a model (Nord, 1997, p. 47). According to Peng, the Chinese Bible translations in the past century, including the Chinese Union Version, the Revised Chinese Union Version (2010) and today's Chinese version, can be classified as instrumental translation or, more specifically, heterofunctional translation, in which the concepts and terms in the target culture are employed to achieve, in the target culture, functions similar to those of the source text in the source culture (Peng, 1992, p. 5).

I will begin textual analysis by comparing the annotations concerning Genesis 2:18 in two devotional Bibles. Annotations and paratexts more generally are important sources of information for scholar researching the reception of a text. Gerard Genette defines paratexts as “those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (peritext) and outside it (epitext), that mediate the book to the reader: titles, and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications,

prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues and afterwords" (1997, p. xviii). Tahir-Gürçaglar (2002) points out the significance of this textual, extratextual and paratextual material for translation research, as it is important in "offering clues about a culture's definition of translation"; she explains that it provides "a valuable insight into the production and reception of translated texts" (p. 45). The first text under study is the Devotional Bible for Women published by Chinese Bible International in 2006; it provides an extensive commentary. Under the leadership of Tsang Suk Yee, a female editor-in-chief, the making of this devotional Bible involved Chinese female contributors, mostly pastors from North America, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other countries, who wrote devotional passages and annotations in the following seven areas: spiritual life, personal growth, work, marriage, singlehood, interpersonal relationship, family, and parenting. The circulation of this Bible is not limited to Hong Kong; indeed, the project targeted an international audience of overseas Chinese Christian women. According to the preface (Devotional Bible for Women, 2006, pp. i-iv.), the purpose of the translation is to help women better understand the full picture of the Bible in a contextualized approach, in response to the ever-increasing demands and difficulties that women face in a knowledge-based economy, in areas of marriage, identity, workplace and spirituality, amongst others. As such, the skopos of the translation is to contextualize the Bible for modern readers, as the preface clearly states (p. iv). In other words, this is a Bible that emphasizes both study and application of scriptures, so that Christian women have a better understanding of their life stories from the Bible, can learn how to live out their faith and find out solutions to their challenges by studying the Word of God.

Example 1 contains an annotation on Genesis 2:18 in the Chinese Union Version's translation. It is an example of the important contribution of female publishers and editors in redefining women's role:

Example 1

又有人以為女人既是「幫助者」，就只能擔當輔助的角色。原來舊約「幫助者」常指戰友同盟，不能就此斷定幫助者與受助者的從屬關係。

所謂「獨居不好」，是指出人的群性，也指出神要男女互補。神造女人，是要她與男人合作，共同完成神賦予人的使命。所以，兩性間是合作的關係，而非權力的駕馭。

默想

耶和華神說：『那人獨居不好，我要為他造一個配偶幫助他。』」（創2:18）

心靈的鏡子

妻子幫助丈夫，既非出於自卑，也非出於高傲，乃是不卑不亢追求在主裡的合一。

Gloss:

Some consider women as "helpers" and can only perform assistant roles. However, "helper" in the Old Testament often refers to ally, hence one cannot jump to conclusion on the superior/ inferior relationship between those who help and those who are helped. When we say "it is not good that men live alone", it refers to the social nature of human beings. It means God wants men and women to complement one another. God made women to cooperate with men in order to complete the mission given by God. As such, both genders are in a collaborative relationship and not a power relationship.

Devotional verse: The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (Genesis 2:18)

Spiritual Reflection

Wives help husbands not out of self-pity nor self-pride; rather, it is out of pursuit for unity in Christ.

In terms of intended readership, with Chinese female Christians as the primary target audience, the Devotional Bible for Women successfully became the first and, at the time of writing, still one of the few Chinese Bibles that appeals to the female Christian community. It contains a collection of a thousand short essays and notes, over forty stories of biblical female characters, as well as a women-focused preface set for each book in the Bible. The Devotional Bible is marketed with a reddish or purple book cover and a feminine design, complete with over three hundred colorful illustrations. Perhaps it is this innovative editorial approach that gained this devotional Bible the third prize in the third annual Gold Book Award Prize Presentation Ceremony organized by the Association of *Christian Publishers Ltd.* in Hong Kong, in 2007. It can be assumed that the reach of this devotional Bible would include only female Christian readers. As such, while promoting collaboration between men and women, the extended annotations could only have a bearing on female readers, while leaving the male community out of the target audience.

The second text under study is the Soul Care Bible, published by Worldwide Bible Society in 2010. In what follows, I examine the same biblical passage. The difference between this version and the Devotional Bible for Women in terms of their emphasis on gender equality is noticeable, as revealed by macro level textual analysis in the sense of Nord, 2005. The Soul Care Bible, also a devotional Bible, is basically a Chinese translation of the Soul Care Bible published in the US, but with an addition of over sixty articles written by Chinese church leaders and counsellors to suit the Chinese context. The purpose or skopos of this Bible is to provide spiritual guidance to Chinese Christians relating to wide-ranging topics which cover emotional and stress management, marriage, employment, youth problems, amongst others. In a similar way to the Devotional Bible for Women, it places emphasis on the application of biblical texts. As such, the intended readership is not only women but any lay Christians, with a particular focus on counsellors, church workers, seminarians as well as pastors⁸. The articles are written by a mix of female and male writers, and the volume is distributed widely in Hong Kong, Taiwan and overseas Chinese Christian bookstores. The editor-in-chief and the consultant team comprise of exclusively male church leaders and scholars, assisted by a team of predominantly female translators responsible for translating the devotional Bible from English to Chinese. In this collaborative translation process, the editor-in-chief decided on the topics and the contributor list for the articles, and had the final say in case of any disputes in the translation process.

While the Devotional Bible for Women has an extended section on gender equality based on Genesis 2:18, text in the Soul Care Bible the emphasis of the commentary of the same biblical text is on the importance of sex within marriage, as Example 2 reveals:

Example 2

神會容許亞當感受孤獨,然後他創造了夏娃,使亞當從她身上認識親密無間一體感的意義。這是世上第一宗一見鍾情的例子,只消看一眼,亞當就深印在心,戀上了夏娃。

神創造亞當和夏娃成為一個關係單位,性是讓他們聯合的部分黏合劑。從起初,神設計了身性,男人與女人可以藉此建立奇妙的關係。性是針對人類的孤單而創造的奇妙關係,然而必須在男女關係一個重要的組合之下才能運用,這個組合就是婚姻。

Gloss:

God allowed Adam to experience loneliness. He then created Eve, who let him experience a sense of physical intimacy. This is the first example of love at first sight. Adam was in love with Eve who left an indelible mark in his heart.

God created Adam and Eve as a relationship unit. Sex is the catalyst for their unity. From the beginning, God designed bodily sex through which man and woman can create a wonderful relationship. Sex is a wonderful relationship created to address the human loneliness, but this must be applied within an important combination in this male-female relationship, and this combination is called marriage.

Among the topics of the articles written within the framework of this project, suppressing women's role in church leadership was not discussed. Rather, there is a separate article to address men's concerns, including the question of how men respond to the phenomenon of increasing female power in the society (Soul Care Bible, 2001, p. 1690). When a male editor-in-chief decides on the topics, it appears that suppressing women's leadership does not concern him as much as the issue of increasing female empowerment.

Apart from these two devotional Bibles, study Bibles published by various Bible societies and Christian publishers in Hong Kong also provide annotations concerning Genesis 2:18 although, due to their concision constraint, they are shorter and refer to a range of verses rather than a specific scriptural verse. The intended readership for Study Bibles are seminarians and church workers; they serve as a tool for cross-referencing or exegetical purpose and contain fewer devotional passages or illustrations than devotional Bibles, though discussion, reflective questions and additional information are increasingly added to appeal to lay readers (Kwong, 1987, p. 1). While the book's publishers are located in Hong Kong and Taiwan, the circulation of these Bibles is not limited to the local region. The volumes are distributed worldwide, and their intended readership are global Chinese Christian readers. Peng Kuo-wei, editor-in-chief of the Chinese Union Study Bible (CUSB), noted that, as the heterofunctional translation strategy adopted by Chinese Bible versions at the present time cannot satisfy the expectations of target readers who are interested in documentary translation (i.e., a Chinese translation which is more faithful to the original), such needs can be met by using an instrumental translation with additional notes providing linguistic, historical, geographical, and cultural information. In other words, the documentary skopos can be achieved by producing a study Bible. Peng further added that the provision of the cultural framework of the source language text through a well-designed translation in CUSB does help the target language readers to gain more accurate understandings of the biblical messages, according to the feedback from participants to their Bible Society's workshops using CUSB as course materials. Editors for the two other study Bibles I have examined for the purpose of this research also confirmed³ that they aim to bring about a study Bible that reflects the original Hebrew culture.

³ An interview with Ms Serena Chan, executive editor of Worldwide Bible Society, Hong Kong, conducted on 23 July 2020 confirmed the above information.

CGST (China Graduate School of Theology) Study Bible	<p>神為亞當造配偶，使夫婦可以互相配搭。V.21[沉睡]：指感覺器官暫時停止發揮功能；故沉睡和見異象常連在一起(創15:12;伯4:13, 32:15;賽29:10)且提到[沉睡的靈]。22[肋骨]:此詞可指胸前的肉或骨、是最接近心臟的部位；表明丈夫和妻子平等的地位,以及親密的程度。(創2:18-21)</p> <p>Back translation: God created a spouse for Adam, so that husband and wife can collaborate with each other. V. 21 [deep sleep]: it means the sensory organs stop functioning. Deep sleep and visions often go hand in hand. See Genesis 15:12; Job 4:13, 32:15; Isaiah 29:10. It also mentions [spirit of deep sleep] 22 [rib]: this refers to the flesh or bone in the chest, which is closest to one's heart; this shows that husband and wife are of equal status, and their degree of intimacy. (Annotations for Gen 2:18-21)</p>
Chinese Union Study Bible	<p>我要為他造一個配偶幫助他 - 宜作[我要給他造個與他相稱的幫助者](參[思])。從2:19-20可知,這幫助者不排除是走獸或飛鳥。另外,在舊約中,神也被稱為幫助者(詩 33:20; 70:5; 121:1-2)</p> <p>I will make him a spouse to help him – better to translate as [I will make him a helper that corresponds to him (refer to Catholic version)]. From 2:19-20 we know that this helper may refer to beasts or birds.</p> <p>In the Old Testament, God is described as the helper (Psa 33:20; 70:5; 121:1-2)</p>
CNV Study Bible (Worldwide Bible Society)	<p>本章最後八節是神造女人的記錄。人需要伴侶,不能孤獨。亞當看完了一切活物—給牠們取了名字,卻找不到可以配合他,幫助他的(20節)。神給他造了女人,是與他同樣有靈性的人。成為他的配偶,長相廝守的伴侶,終生的合作者,建基在愛與無私的給予上。亞當稱她為‘骨中的骨,肉中的肉’,叫她做“女人”。從聖經此處記載,可以看見:1,男人先於女人,就像父母先於子女,這種次序是神所定(林前11:8-9;弗5:22-25;彼前3:1,7)。2,“夫妻”站在同等地位上共同生活,同甘共苦,彼此相悅(23-24節)。夫妻為神所配合(22節,可10:9),是永久的盟約(24節,可10:7-8),3 夫妻間應完全互敬互信,無猜無忌,生活在完美的愛裡(25節)。The last 8 chapters record how God created woman. Human beings need companions and cannot live alone. Adam, after seeing all creatures and giving them names, cannot find one that can help him (v. 20) God created woman for him, one who has the same spirituality as him to become his spouse, a life-long companion and collaborator, and their relationship is based on love and unconditional giving. Adam called her “bone of bones, flesh of the flesh”, and called her “woman.” From the Bible one can see that 1, man is created before woman, just like parents are before children, this creation order is decided by God (1 Cor 11:8-9; Ephesians 5:22-25; 1 Peter 3:1,7) 2 “husband and wife” live together on the same status, they experience good and bad times together and please each other (v. 23-24). Husband and wife are put together by God (v.22, Mark 10:9), in an everlasting covenant (v. 24; Mark 10:7-8), 3 husband and wife should respect and trust each other and live in perfect love (v.25) (Annotations for Genesis 2:20-25)</p>

Table 1: Annotations concerning Genesis 2:18 in three Chinese study Bibles.

The length of annotations in the Study Bibles was often limited by typographical issues such as the space available for typesetting⁴. That said, the choices made by reviewers or editors of what to pick and what to leave out in a short note is of paramount importance. As seen in the above annotations on Genesis 2:18, they are all concerned with gender equality in one way or another. In the CGST version, gender equality was not tackled directly based on Genesis

⁴ Andrew Kwong (1987), one of the key reviewers of the CGST Study Bible, suggested additional questions and supplementary information to fill up blank spaces in an earlier edition of this Study Bible; such typesetting arrangements had an impact on the layout for the current version.

2:18, but on the fact that Eve was made out of Adam's rib, which implies her equal status with Adam. The annotation started with a brief remark: 神為亞當造配偶, 使夫婦可以互相配搭 [God created a spouse for Adam, so that husband and wife can collaborate with each other]. A collaborative relationship does not imply that both husband and wife are equal. It is worth noting that the contributor of the annotations for the Book of Genesis in Chinese translation, a renowned Old Testament Scholar, wrote an extensive exegetical commentary for Genesis 2-3 in his other published work (Kwong, 1997, p. 233). He clearly pointed out that, Genesis 2:18, 'help' does not convey any sense of inferiority and pointed out that the Hebrew word *`ezer* [helper] is also used to describe God as a "helper" of his people, for example in Psalm 33:20. However, such clarity cannot be seen in the annotations he wrote for the CGST Study Bible. In Worldwide Bible's CNV Study Bible it briefly mentioned that husband and wife live together as equals as Genesis 2:23-24 says. Among the three versions, the Chinese Union Study Bible is the most unambiguous in pointing to readers that 'helper' — is a term which describes God in several biblical passages.

As previous studies suggested that the weakness of woman in facing temptations is usually cited as a reason for denying women ordination, Genesis 3:6 should serve as a powerful argument against such proposition. Phyllis Trible (1978) pointed out that the Hebrew text makes it clear that Adam was present when the serpent talked to Eve. However, among the three Bible versions discussed above, only CUSB made a point to refer to Adam's presence, though its annotations are shorter compared to the other two. In fact, the contributor for the Book of Genesis in the CGST Study Bible did elaborate, in his later published commentary, the presence of Adam in Genesis 3:16 as a way to support the wife's decision to eat the fruit, in view of the fact that he did not object or protest but remained silent throughout (Kwong, 1997, p. 285). This contributor also went at lengths to explain in his commentary that Adam's presence during the temptation of Eve in Genesis 3:6 was implied in the Hebrew source text. For instance, he quoted from Old Testament scholar Savran regarding Adam's presence and highlighted the use of plural 'you' when the serpent spoke to the woman (Kwong, 1997, p. 275), meaning that the man was also addressed. However, no annotation was made on this verse at all in the CGST Study Bible.

CGST Study Bible	Nil
CUSB	<p>宜作[又給了與她在一起的丈夫] (和修)。顯示當妻子與蛇談話時,亞當一直在場。</p> <p>Back translation: Better to translate as "also gave to the husband who was with her" (RCUV). It shows Adam has always been present when Eve was talking to the serpent. (Annotation for Gen 3:6)</p>

CNV Study Bible (Worldwide Bible Society)	<p>罪實質上是人不信任神,不相信神的話,要自主(見2:16)。真正的信仰是基於信任與神交往,生出順服來(約14:15)。見創3章一文。女人的決定是基於實質價值、對美觀的欣賞和心靈得滿足。就摘下果子來吃了:她這樣做,就與死亡及黑暗之王結盟。神無條件、不能抗拒的揀選,是她現在唯一的盼望(見3:15註)。他也吃了:男人成了叛徒。他有足夠動機信任和順服神,但卻選擇了不順服(6:5,8:21)。亞當藉著神的委託,代表了人類,作為約的頭目,使死亡臨到所有的人;正如基督使生命臨到所有信靠祂的人(羅5:12-19)。Sin is a form of self-opinion, it is essentially distrusting God, and distrusting his words (see 2:16) Real trust is based on trust and a relationship with God, which gives rise to obedience (John 14:15). See the article on Genesis 3. The woman's decision is based on the physical value, an appreciation of beauty and spiritual satisfaction. She took the fruit and ate it: When she did this, she already tied knots with death and darkness. God's unconditional and irresistible calling is her only hope (see 3:15 annotations). He also ate: man became a traitor. He has enough motivation to trust and obey God, but he decided to disobey (6:5, 8:21). Adam represents humankind, the head of the covenant through the commission of God, his decision gave rise to death that fell upon all human beings; just as Jesus sent life upon all those who trust in him (Romans 5:12-19) (Annotation based on Gen 3:6)</p>
---	--

Table 2: Annotations concerning Genesis 3:6 in three Chinese study Bibles.

In the CGST version, the annotations were authored by CGST teachers, students, alumni as well as biblical scholars, upon invitation. These annotations were then reviewed by China Graduate School of Theology teachers or individual scholars who had research interests or expertise in a particular book in the Bible. The final draft was proofread by the editor-in-chief before it was sent to print. This Bible was meant to fulfil the growing need for a study Bible that contains annotations, cross-references and preface for each book, written within a Chinese context that suits Chinese readers, as study Bibles on the market at the time of publication were mainly direct translations from English Study Bibles. After twenty years of planning, preparation and coordination, this version was published in 2000. While the editor-in-chief was a CGST female faculty member, the team of reviewers who review the manuscripts were predominantly male scholars, some of whom were responsible for the project's overall planning and for inviting contributors⁵. The role of the editor-in-chief mainly focused on the proofreading and polishing of the manuscript before it was sent to print.

The CNV Study Bible is basically a translation of an English study Bible of the reformed tradition⁶ edited by a team of theologians; it contains the important creeds and declarations used in reformed churches, such as the Westminster Larger Catechism. In addition to the over sixty theological articles translated from English, this Chinese Bible also contains over ten articles on the fundamentals of the Christian faith written by Chinese biblical scholars. The male editor-in-chief was assisted by a female executive editor in all proof-reading, editing, printing, and reprinting matters. The Chinese annotations, translated from the English version, reflect the theology of the reformed traditions which to a great extent do not favour an egalitarian position as they uphold the authority of the Bible denying women access to the ministry of the word. Thus, theologically, this study Bible has affinities with the CGST Study Bible, whose

⁵ According to my online interview with Esther Ng, the chief editor of CGST Study Bible (on 22 August 2020), Andrew Kwong is the contributor for the annotations in the book of Genesis, in which he has research expertise.

⁶ The annotations for this Bible were translated from the annotations in Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible (2003), which is a major revision and expansion of an earlier publication entitled New Geneva Study Bible (1995).

main editors and major contributors are rooted in the Chinese evangelical tradition that has downplayed women's church leadership. Both the evangelical and reformed traditions in the Chinese society that attach importance to a literal interpretation of scriptures could partly explain the less gender inclusive nature of the paratexts. The case of women ordination for the Christian Missionary and Alliance Church in Hong Kong, an evangelical denomination (see discussion later in this paper) explains how ordained female ministers are still subject to a male-dominated system. On the contrary, CUSB set itself apart from the other two study Bibles as CUSB is interdenominational and works under the auspices of United Bible Societies, which established itself as the interdenominational and non-sectarian organisation⁷. CUSB is therefore more interested in producing textual notes that help readers understand the textual issues of the source texts in terms of the most up-to-date textual-critical scholarship, rather than steering readers towards a certain theological viewpoint.

In the case of the Chinese Union Study Bible (CUSB), the annotations are based on the Bible Society's very own revised Chinese Bible version, known as the Revised Chinese Union Version (RCUV). This version was published in 2010 as an update to the hundred-year-old Chinese Union Version (CUV) which appeared in 1919. According to Peng Kuo-wei, editor-in-chief of this project commissioned by United Bible Societies, the motivation was to compensate the communication deficiencies of traditional Bible translation (i.e., the strategy for rendering the source texts) as well as to update Chinese Union Version's readers on the current state of Biblical scholarship (Peng, 2019a, p. 7). While other non-Bible Societies versions achieved the instrumental dimension of translation via application notes, i.e., paratexts, he opined that the Bible Societies' stance on these application notes is that they may be "wrongly conceived as the meaning or intent of the source language text and they may also have the potential to mislead the target language readers to think that these notes represent the only ways to connect the texts with the readers' contemporary situations." He added:

For these reasons, the Bible Societies discourages the use of application notes. A less problematic way to realize the instrumental side of the communicative interaction is probably through raising relevant questions by following the trajectories sprung from the documentary information in the study Bible. (Peng, 2019a, p. 9)

This explains why the length of annotations in CUSB is relatively shorter than the other two study Bibles, although their shorter length does not reduce their effectiveness in communicating gender inclusivity. The Bible Society retranslation of In its Revised Chinese Union Version (2010), Genesis 3:6n contains the addition of 與她一起的 [who is with her] as a pre-modifier to Adam to show his presence in the face of temptation⁸. Since this revision has been made in RCUV compared to the previous version of CUV, it is reasonable to assume that the Bible Society made a point in the annotations for Genesis 3:6 to show readers that a revision has been made. During the process of compilation, annotations for the Old Testament were first written by their project consultant Old Testament Biblical scholar Graham Ogden which were then translated into Chinese by a team of translators hired on the basis of their credentials. As I investigated the translation process of the three Bible translations into Chinese, it emerged during the interviews I conducted that all the publishers valued the collaborative translation process, and all translators were selected based on their merits and credentials rather than on

⁷ More information about United Bible Societies is available on the website www.unitedbiblesocieties.org

⁸ According to an email reply from Dr Liang Wangwei, one of the reviewers for RCUV Old Testament, it is the Bible Society's translation consultant Dr Yu Suee-Yan that suggested the revision on Gen 3:6, to better reflect the source language meaning. Dr Liang, the only female reviewer for the Old Testament, did not participate in the revision of the book of Genesis.

their gender⁹.

Given the less visible mention of gender equality in the annotations in two of the three study Bibles discussed in this study, what are the reasons behind this choice, considering that women were involved in the collaborative process? I have endeavoured to reveal that, though seemingly in leadership roles in the editorial process, women were often relegated to assistant roles under the authority of male reviewers or consultants. In other words, the authority of exegesis and the overall planning of the book project remained with the male biblical scholars. Female editors were responsible for the coordination, liaison or proofreading process, or at best involved in reviewing a particular book in the Bible rather than taking up the de facto leadership role in spearheading the direction or editorial approach of the study Bible. Secondly, since the target audience of these study Bibles is especially the general public, the editorial team had to take marketability into account in the preparation of commentaries that were suitable for both genders.

4. Impact on churches

The way in which translations into Chinese shape the interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 often leads to important denominational decisions, including the question of the ordination of women. As such, the importance of women's involvement in the translation process in view of empowering future female leaders cannot be underestimated. This can be eloquently illustrated by the ordination of women within the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Hong Kong, which is an evangelical church. No female ministers were ordained until 1992, when the Alliance Bible Seminary, sponsored by this denomination, initiated an official discussion on female ordination and subsequently rejected it. The church union committee set up a theological viewpoint committee to conduct research on the theology of women ordination. Consultations were carried out with female coworkers, senior pastors, preachers and deacons, to discuss the church's viewpoint. In the end, in May 1998, it was resolved that as long as the church was governed by men (Cheung, 1998), women of talent and "good conduct" should be allowed to take up pastoral roles. In the document the committee published in June 1998, the Pauline interpretation of the creation order is cited to determine the role of women in church:

創世記第二章中有關創造的記載則強調男女之間被造的差異，並且在這差異中學習相輔相成，尋求以不同的角色互相配搭。保羅從亞當夏娃的被造過程中指出亞當領導夏娃的一種從屬關係和創造次序，這種從屬關係來自三方面：第一，亞當的首先被造（林前十一8，提前二13），而這首先被造的身份帶來如長子一樣的地位和領導的責任（西一15-18）；第二，夏娃出自亞當，因此男是女的源頭，這創造的次序和模式給予亞當權柄為夏娃命名（創三20），這命名的行動包含著領導的意義（創二20、23）；第三，夏娃是為亞當而造的（林前十一9），使她成為幫助他的配偶（創二18），叫男女能同心協力建立家庭和治理全地。

Gloss:

The differences between men and women are stressed in Gen 2, and such differences imply complementation of the roles. Paul pointed out that Adam is the leader of Eve from the creation order, and this comes from three aspects: 1) Adam was created first (1 Corinthians 11:9, 2 Timothy 13), giving him the position to lead as a first-born son (Colossians 1:15-18). 2) Secondly, Eve comes from Adam, so man is the head of woman, and has the authority to name her (Genesis 3:20), implying a leadership role (Genesis

⁹ Interviews for the purpose of this study were conducted in July 2020 with Peng Kuo-Wei, editor-in-chief and translation consultant of the Chinese Union Study Bible Series, Esther Ng, chief editor of CGST Study Bible, and Serena Ng, executive editor of Worldwide Bible Society.

2:20,23). 3) Eve is created for Adam, making her a spouse that assists him (Genesis 2:18) so that they can build up a family and manage the earth.

Although it was decided that women can be ordained, their role continues to be downplayed. Ordination is, according to the denomination, a ceremony that does not endow the ordained person with spiritual power, gifts or a title. Based on such understanding of ordination, which is more of a form of recognition for the spiritually, the denomination considers that the ordination of women does not go against any biblical principles, as long as they operate under the leadership of male pastors. Women pastors are still, in this sense, created as 'helpers' suitable for men, as the Chinese (and other) translations go.

5. Conclusions

To sum up, as the above comparative textual analysis reveals, when women are involved in the overall leadership of the publication of a translation of the Bible into Chinese, as in the case of the Devotional Study Bible for Women, issues of female inequality are more likely to be addressed and discussed. While retranslations of the Bible are still the domain of predominantly male biblical scholars in the Chinese community, women's perspectives can still be brought to the fore by way of gender-inclusive commentaries and annotations.

The reasons behind the lack of female involvement in Bible translation in the Chinese community are multifold: evangelical churches and seminaries in the US, a popular destination for Hong Kong-based seminarians, have long adopted a complementarian model where women are relegated to assistant roles and there is only a very small number of female pastors, according to Maureen Yeung, former principal of Evangel Seminary in Hong Kong. The lack of support for female seminarians is not conducive to training women. Some US evangelical seminaries did not welcome female seminarians until the 1960s or even the 1970s. As there is an increase in the number of Chinese women becoming biblical scholars in recent decades, Maureen Yeung foresees that there will be more women involved in the translation of the Bible into Chinese in the near future. In an interview on 27 August 2020 she opined that Chinese men have become more supportive of their wives' careers and pursuit of degrees (including doctorates) which might be higher than those the men hold. Family commitments, which used to hinder women from envisaging further education in the past, are becoming less of an issue, with the help of supportive husbands.

To achieve a noticeable change in the foreseeable future, revisiting Pauline hermeneutics and the Hebrew Bible are crucial aspects of theological education. But it is a long road ahead, in view of the opposition from evangelical and reformed churches which are less receptive to a revolutionary feminist approach. A female theology graduate once told me that theology students were warned by the pastor not to take courses on feminist theology because it is dangerous (the reasons for such perceived danger deserve discussion in a separate paper). Within a Christian setting, education at this stage can only start at interdenominational seminary schools that are more open to a feminist approach and, from there, a more academic approach towards biblical interpretation could be relayed to future generations down the line. As in the case of study Bibles, a thorough approach to textual-critical scholarship can help seminarians gain more accurate understanding of the source text and its gender-related content. Additionally, in a secular university setting, translation programmes can introduce feminist approaches in translation theory modules so as to train potential religious text translators inspired by their feminist predecessors. Just as Luise von Flotow pointed out, translators' positionality is undeniable: the translator always "writes from a specific moment, from within a specific culture and usually sub-culture, and often in dialogue with the social

and political culture of the moment” (2000, p. 18). An ideological shift can only come about slowly, and it may be years until we see more gender-inclusive annotations and translations for which women are in charge. But there is hope, as long as society as a whole continues to head towards gender equality.

6. References

- Census and Statistics Department. (2020). *Women and men in key statistics*. Hong Kong: Census and Statistics Department. https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/data/stat_report/product/B1130303/att/B11303032020AN20B0100.pdf [last accessed 10 September 2021]
- Cheung, J. M. (1998). 《從聖經看婦女的地位及事奉》 Christian Missionary and Alliance Pastoral Letters. Volume 12.
- Feng, X. 馮象. (2006). 《摩西五經》 [Torah or the five books of Moses]. Oxford University Press.
- Feng, X. 馮象. (2008). 《智慧書》 [The books of wisdom]. Oxford University Press.
- Von Flotow, L. (2000). Women, Bibles, ideologies. *TTR: Traduction, terminologie, rédaction*, 13(1), 9-20.
- Genette, G. (1997). *Paratexts: Thresholds on interpretation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hong Kong Christian Women Council Annual Report 1995.
- Kwong, A. (1987). Congzhuomian shang na ben shengjing chuan zhu zhushi ben shuo qi 《從桌面上那本聖經. 串珠、註釋本說起》 China Graduate School of Theology Newsletter. volume 127, p.1.
- Kwong, A. (1997). 《天道聖經註釋 – 創世記卷一》 [Tien Dao Bible Commentary- Genesis 1] Hong Kong: Tien Dao.
- Lu, C. 呂振中. (1970). *Jiuxinyue shengjing 《舊新約聖經》*. Hong Kong: Bible Society.
- Nord, C. (1997). Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained. St. Jerome.
- Nord, C. (2005). Text analysis in translation: Theory, methodology, and didactic application of a model for translation-oriented text analysis (2nd ed). Rodopi.
- Peng, K. (2012). Contemplating the future of Chinese Bible translation: A functionalist approach. *The Bible translator*, 63(1), 1-16.
- Peng, K. (2019a). Issues in translating culture in the field of Bible translation and an attempt to tackle them. Paper presented at *Academic discussion of the translation of ancient texts and their effects on cultural exchanges* at the School of Philosophy & Religious Studies, Minzu University of China, Beijing on Oct 20-24, 2019
- Peng, K. (2019b). Commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Union version. United Bible Societies.
- Tahir-Gürçaglar, S. (2002). The use of paratexts in translation research. In T. Hermans (Ed.), *Crosscultural transgressions* (pp. 44-60). St. Jerome.
- Trible, P. (1978). *God and the rhetoric of sexuality*. Fortress Press.
- Wong, W. (2001). Women in resistance: four denominational studies on the ordination of women in Hong Kong (MPhil Thesis). Chinese University of Hong Kong.
- Wylie, A. (1867). Memorials of protestant missionaries to the Chinese. *American Prebyterian Mission Press*, 1-3.

Bible versions

- 《聖經-串珠註釋本》 [The Bible – CGST Study Edition.] (2000). Hong Kong: China Graduate School of Theology.
- 《研讀本系列 – 創世記》 [Chinese Union Study Bible – Genesis] . (2014). Taipei: Bible Society.
- 《心靈關懷聖經 – 新譯本》 [CNV Soul Care Bible.]. (2010). Hong Kong: The Worldwide Bible Society.
- 《研讀版聖經 – 新譯本》 [CNV Study Bible.] (2008). Hong Kong: The Worldwide Bible Society.
- 《聖經姊妹版》 [Devotional Study Bible for Women]. (2006). Hong Kong: Chinese Bible International.
- 《新譯本》 [New Chinese version]. (1992, 1999, 2001). Hong Kong: Tien Dao.
- 《和合本修訂版》 [New Testament – Revised Chinese Union Version]. (2006). Hong Kong: Bible Society.
- Spirit of the Reformation Study Bible. (2003). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- The soul care Bible: Experiencing and sharing hope God's way. (2001). Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



 Jenny Wong

University of Birmingham
Edgbaston
B15 2TT, Birmingham
United Kingdom

j.y.wong@bham.ac.uk

Biography: Jenny Wong is currently Lecturer in modern languages at the University of Birmingham. She has taught translation and interpretation at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Hang Seng Management College in Hong Kong, the United International College in Zhuhai, and at other universities in the UK. She is the founder of the Society for English Learning Through Biblical Literature (SELBL, <https://www.selbl.org>), a non-profit organization that promotes the cultural significance of the Bible among international students. She is also ordained minister at Glasgow Chinese Grace Church.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.