

The phenomenon of translation of sacral texts in modern Christian discourse

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Abstract. The features of the translation of the biblical text, which always loses and distorts the essence of the original, are analyzed, introducing national, linguistic, cultural and religious features into the translated text. It was found that the content-axiological basis for the formation of national traditions of biblical translation is the emergence of many cultural and religious semantic universes that contradict each other and the original Hebrew and Greek texts and their hermeneutical traditions. The national tradition of biblical translation is far from being formed in every Christian country; its presence is an indicator of the spiritual maturity of a nation. The conditions for its formation are the developed writing and the national literary tradition; powerful national confessional structure with the presence of theological centers; development of translation work (traditions of translation and linguistic schools).

1 Introduction

The Bible is, first of all, a sacred religious text. The biblical text cannot be translated or interpreted in isolation from the theological tradition in the bosom of which it appeared, because the New Testament texts became a written fixation of the faith and theology of the early Christian communities, that is, religious experience precedes the formal text and gives rise to it. If this direct experience of faith disappears or is lost, the perception of the text automatically becomes subjective. Undoubtedly, “there are places in the Bible where theology is the only determining factor in the translation” (Furuli, 2011, p.79). Analysis of the translation of the biblical text in any language is always based not only on a deep knowledge of the cultural and linguistic-stylistic aspects of the emergence and existence of this text, at the same time it is necessary to consider that the Bible “has a dual nature: it is a literary work and at the same time theologically significant text” (Talberg, 2000, p.85). Theologians believe that it is necessary “to abandon the idea of the self-sufficiency of translations. The translation makes the biblical message understandable, but at the same time it does something more: it makes the Message receptive. In the ideal case, the translation should not close the text on it, but open it for interpretation and preaching” (Talberg, 2000, p.86).

So the philosophical and religious analysis of biblical translations is impossible without taking into account an understanding of the essence of biblical translation in the Christian

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theological tradition and in modern Christian discourse. The difference in the approaches to the translation of the Bible by Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, and (relative to the Old Testament) Jews has a doctrinal character and cultural and historical contextual origin is clearly defined.

The purpose of the article: to analyze the biblical narratives as the basis of the cultural-semantic universum of Christianity. We find in the Bible both the mythological version of the origin of the language and the version of its separation. The Bible describes the process of creating the world by naming things. Speaking, or rather naming, underlies the creation of the world by God. The beginning of Creation was the Word that “was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1: 1). It is interesting that God gave names only to the most significant objects, he called light by day, and darkness by night, firmament by sky, and land by land, water by sea. As for all living beings on Earth, their first name was entrusted by God to the first man of Adam.

Thus, the word, that is, speech, turns out to be the fundamental principle of the universe, the basis of awareness of the world around by the first person. In other words, the emergence of consciousness occurs simultaneously with the emergence of language. The biblical text also contains confirmation of the scientific theory of monogenesis and the subsequent division of languages. These events are described in the Bible as follows: After the flood, the descendants of Noah began to settle on the ground. “In the whole earth there is one language and one dialect” (Gen. 11:1). The Lord said: “One people, and one language for all, and this is the beginning of their work. Now there will be nothing impossible for them that they have conceived to do. Therefore, let us go down and confuse their language there so that one does not understand the speech of the other. ” And the Lord scattered them from there throughout the whole earth, and they stopped building a city. Therefore, the name given to him is Babylon (confusion), for there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth. And the Lord scattered them from there throughout all the earth» (Gen. 11: 6-9). Babylon became associated with multilingualism, which could not but affect the follow-up of translators. The legend of Babylon is also interesting from a linguistic point of view, since the etymology of the name Babylon itself, which is mythologically interpreted in the Bible, most likely has nothing to do with the legend of language confusion (Garbovsky, 2004, p.30-33).

According to the Bible, mankind from the times of Babylon is divided culturally, mentally and historically in order to unite itself in the cognition of God, and the Word was God calling people to communicate with each other and with others, if only to establish themselves meaningfully in the world. Returning to the idea of punishing impudent humanity with God by multilingualism and fragmentation, let us remember that it was necessary for God to establish the image and likeness of God in every single person with his personal consciousness and individual characteristics. The deep theological origin of the ecclesiological theme, its rooting in the Christian notion of God the Word, became human, the proclamation of a single Word of God by a multitude of human languages (through a variety of interpretations in various contexts, starting from the Nativity of Christ in specific socio-historical conditions, to the realization of its global mission or such discretion in a separate human life). The ecclesiological arguments about the relationship between the singular and the plural number of its manifestations (the meaning and content of its expression, essence and its manifested forms) are based on theologians of different faiths. The biblical narration about the Tower of Babe hints us to two dangers: 1) humanity can remain dispersed and destroyed due to multilingualism and the inability to explain; 2) humanity can become monolingual (ideologically monological), that is, to encroach upon divine status and approach the final state of self-determination (to forget in the loneliness of the non-demand for Others).

The apotheosis of the biblical understanding of the Word is the concept of Christ-Logos. The concept of the Logos is an eternal problem of Christian theology, a problem that stands “on the other side” from the vicissitudes of life, over confessional differences and theological disputes. Concept Logos is one of the cornerstones of Christian theology, on which the general paradigmatic axiomatics, methodological programs and interpretative norms of Christian doctrine are built, the basis of European Christian culture: Logos, the Word of God, God's hypostasis immersed in the soul of everyone, which gives Christians the opportunity to verbal communication with the world, people and God. Early Christian apologist I. AD Justin in his apologies emphasizes the connection of Jesus Christ as the eternal Logos with the world in its spatial and temporal historical formation and with each person included in this world formation “We are taught that Christ is the firstborn God, and He is the Word to which the whole human race is involved. Those who lived according to the Word were Christians, although they were considered atheists: such between the Hellenes – Socrates and Heraclitus and the like, and from the barbarians – Abraham, Ananias, Azaria, Ilya and many others ...” (1 Apology, 45).

After the Word was embodied in Christ, crucified and resurrected, a “New Testament philological miracle” occurred – Pentecost – the descent of the Holy Spirit, which gave the apostles the opportunity to overcome language barriers through the divine gift of understanding the language of the nations, among which they must preach the Word of God, to bear The Good News has been chosen by God. “At first the only and perfect (as from God) tongue of Adam; then mixing and scattering as a punishment for the vanity of a man during the creation of the pillar in Babylon; finally, “the redemption of languages” is a remarkable “speaking in languages”, granted to the Trinity by the Holy Spirit to the multilingual apostles (Act: 2) – these are the main milestones of the biblical history of languages” (Mechkovskaya, 1998, p.276).

The Bible focuses on three “word-centered” aspects of human existence, which underlie the understanding of the translation problems we study in the context of confessional theology: the word as the basis, source and driving force of creation; the word as the basis of mutual understanding of humanity and a pledge of the infinite possibilities of a single humanity; the word as the hypostasis of God, based on Christian ecclesiology and soteriology.

The next key question that every religious tradition that has sacred texts answers, and which every philosophical and religious study of the narrative traditions of specific religions must take into account, is the question of the translatability of these texts and the related question of the limits of this translatability. Every world religion is trying to solve this problem in its own way. The Judeo-Christian tradition considers the translation of sacred texts possible, although Judaism insists on the fundamental untranslatability of some places of the Torah, considering that the “sacredness of the original source” is preserved in the translation text. The Islamic tradition insists on the fundamental non-translatability of the text of the Quran, believing that Allah hears only the language of the Quran, and translations of the Book in other languages completely lose their sacrality and cannot be used in worship. In the process of translating the New Testament Christian translators not only translated the text from the Greek language but also made a number of additions to it that are missing in the primary source.

At the same time attempts to preserve the sanctity and authenticity of the cultural and semantic universe of Revelation to ensure the identity of the translation to the original as large as possible, gives rise to the “eternal conflict” between translators and theologians: translation appears only when its appearance is very necessary for the Christian community, in the case of the existence of at least a small opportunity not to translate the sacred text, it is used and distributed in the original language. Specific in the narrative traditions of world religions, including Christianity, is the attitude towards the languages with which the sacred

texts were first translated. This question is also a matter of principle for linguistic religious studies. The languages in which the dogmas are first stated or recorded and then canonized are called prophetic or apostolic (messenger languages). These include: the language of the Vedas; Sanskrit, Mahabharata and Ramayana; Avesta (Zoroastrian language); Wenyan – the ancient Chinese speech of Confucius; the speech piles is the language of the Buddhist canon; Classical Arabic of the Quran; Hebrew and Aramaic language of the Jewish canon "Tanakh"; Ancient Greek (the speech of the Septuagint and the New Testament) and Latin (the speech of the Vulgate) as the languages in which the religious canon of Christianity was created; Old Slavonic (Church Slavonic) language, which from the IX century. became the language of Eastern Christianity among the Slavs and the Valachomoldavans (Mechkovskaya, 1998, p.259-260). "The prophetic and apostolic languages were the first religious (ritual) languages, that is, the languages are used in worship. By virtue of the non-conventional perception of the sign, such languages were often sacralized (revered as sacred). The exclusive authority of prophetic languages is connected with this as in our own cultural and religious worlds" (Mechkovskaya, 1998, p.260). Religious communities, trying to preserve spiritual treasures recorded in prophetic languages, tried at all costs to preserve texts and speeches in their original form. These languages are extremely stable and have basically a wide range of communicative functions: they are not only languages of the religious sphere, but also languages of secular culture, education, science, literature, law and the like. From antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages, prophetic languages were opposed by folk languages, which were at first low-prestigious. To designate them sociolinguists use the Latin term *vernaculae* (from *vernaculus* – native, local, domestic) (Mechkovskaya, 1998, p.261).

In the process of the secularization of social life the exclusivity of the prophetic language ebbed to the background, which allowed the translations of the Holy Scriptures and the divine services in national languages. The newest languages have assumed the main confessional functions of the prophetic languages – to be the languages of Scripture and worship (ritual). However, even performing the functions of religious languages, new (popular) confessional speeches are not considered sacred, therefore, their sacralization does not occur.

The history of the biblical translation began long before the emergence of Christianity. The nature of the arguments made in the Talmud about the undesirability of the translations of Scripture indicates that they are caused by jealousy about the Truth that hurts the Procrustean bed of someone else's speech, with its own semantic features not conforming to the original, that it is impossible to adapt to it. However, attempts to translate the Scriptures were caused by objective necessity – even before the emergence of Christianity, for which the Jewish Bible became one of the sources of dogma. The profound differences between the writing literary traditions of the Slavs depend on which language – Church Slavonic or Latin – was used as the first confessional language of a given cultural area. The peoples in the area of *Slavia Latina* (Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes) were included in the sphere of Western Christian (Catholic) influence and Latin. The peoples of the *Slavia Orthodoxa* (southern and Eastern Slavs) professed Orthodoxy in its Byzantine version. In their church-book culture, Greek language was in high esteem, and the language of divine service and Scripture was Church Slavonic, which was called *Slovene*.

So *sacra lingua* (sacred language) for the Eastern and Southern Slavs is Church Slavonic, and for the Western Slavs – Latin. Due to the fact that the Latin language was removed from the national languages, in the Catholic countries a so-called two-literary form was formed, when in parallel there was a literary tradition of the national language and Latin, and their confusion was linguistically impossible. Orthodox Slavs, on the contrary, the Church Slavonic language was clear to the masses without translation, that is how the only literary tradition was being developed in which Church Slavonic language

also combined the functions of the sacred language and the language of culture (science, education, law), but it was perceived as a “high style” of a single language process in which the national language was considered as “low”, everyday style. In the later controversy of the Orthodox Church with the Catholic, it was felt that while Constantinople supported “national” languages, including Slavic, Rome prohibited the use of any language other than Latin. In fact, both the Roman and Byzantine churches allowed the use of the local language for apostolic purposes, that is, to clarify the dogmas of the Christian teaching to illiterate people and, more generally, to those who did not speak Latin, Greek or other language, among those already established in the church tradition (for example, Aramaic or Armenian). In the Roman Catholic Church this principle was officially confirmed with reference to the Romanesque and Germanic dialects at the Episcopal Church Council in Tours in 813. The Roman Catholic bishops had to preach in the spoken language of the local people so that everyone could understand the Christian preacher.

One of the most important tasks that the representatives of the Reformation set for themselves was the translation of the Bible into “national” languages, which meant the end of the Catholic monopoly of reading and interpreting the Bible. Representatives of the Western European Renaissance did not consider necessary to translate the Bible into the national languages, although they actively tried to improve it. If the right to view the Latin translation of the Bible (as well as the philological criticism of its originals) did not cause doubts in the overwhelming majority of humanists, then their attitude to the admissibility of the transfer of Holy Scripture to “national” languages was more complicated. After all such attempts, on the one hand, for many centuries caused a sharply negative reaction from Catholic orthodoxy (before cruel repression) and, on the other hand, they often became the banner of “heretical” movements since the Middle Ages. Considerations not so much philological as ideological and political nature played an important role there.

It is interesting that Erasmus of Rotterdam, for which Latin was a universal means of communication, also did not share the notorious medieval theory of “trilingualism.” V. Tyndale, justifying the right to create the English Bible, referred to his statements made shortly before the beginning of the Reformation: “I would like all women to read the Gospel and Paul’s epistles; and I pray to the Lord that they will be translated into the languages of all people – so that they can be read and know not only by the Irish and the Scots, but also by the Turks and the Saracens. I pray to the Lord that the plowman, following his plow, would sing the text of the Scripture. And so that the weaver remembered him in his own tool, fending off the boredom. And so the traveler thus get rid of fatigue. In short, I would like everything that is said in the Scripture to be expressed in this way, which is typical of our daily communication” (Op. by: 57, 143). This was made possible thanks to the translation work, which began with the beginning of the Reformation in the countries of the still united Catholic Europe. If for the people of the Renaissance tradition in the foreground when translating and interpreting the biblical text was, conditionally speaking, a philological aspect, then for the supporters of the Reformation, the main goal was the struggle against the Roman curia, the instrument of which was a sacred text that was accessible and non-Latin (without speaking about Ancient Greek and Hebrew languages) “ignoramuses”.

2 Conclusion

Thus, the common language process, which lasted in Christian Europe after the adoption of Christianity by European nations, part of which is the history of Bible translations into the national languages of these peoples, is a process of interaction between prophetic and ethnic languages. On the one hand, if the adoption of the Christian religion took place in a language, an alien mass consciousness of believers, which required constant translation (for

example, Latin in Western European countries), the scope of the use of sacred language in religious practice was narrowed by replacing sacral language with popular languages, first in a sermon, and then in liturgical events. On the other hand, if Christianization has occurred understandable, then this does not require translation, as it was in Kievan Rus and throughout the Orthodox Slavic world: a process of interpenetration of sacral and folk languages occurs, gradually leading to the formation of “regional” variants in the sacred language.

Designating the formations and main collisions of theological discourse in which translation activities on the Bible and other sacred Christian texts take place in the language ranges of the main confessions of the Christian world, should consider modern theories of biblical translation that allow us to understand not only the creative laboratory of the Bible translator, but also to make a generalization which will be the basis of the religious methodology for analyzing biblical translations in the context of the national cultures of the modern world.

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