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Bible Translation between Anthropology and Theology[1]

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The Bible is being translated into more and more languages with each passing year. Moreover, languages into which it has already been translated are getting new versions, which are often based on somewhat different translation principles than the previous versions. The area of Biblical studies used to be dominated by theology, but theology lost its central importance in the latter 20th century, replaced by linguistics, anthropology and other humanities disciplines. However, theology is slowly regaining its former importance under new circumstances and in a new way. This paper gives a brief overview of this new trend, based on the author's twenty years of experience in this field in Russia and neighbouring countries, first as a Bible translator and editor with the Bible society, then as a translation consultant with the Institute for Bible Translation in Moscow, Russia.

1. New theories for new translations

Those who translate the Bible may have different beliefs and convictions, but the Bible as a specific corpus of ancient texts always has been translated primarily as the Holy Scripture of Jews and Christians, that is, the book which says the most important things about God. On the other hand, translation is done by people and for people who have their specific traditional beliefs, languages and cultures which to a large extent define the ways in which one can speak

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about God.

So, by definition, Bible translation has a lot to do with theology. In fact, the first thing any theologian would do in order to make a doctrinal statement would be to read a version of the Bible in a modern language. So, his theology would be somehow dependent on translators' work – and likewise the other way round, for a translator of the Bible would typically start doing this work having in mind certain presuppositions of a theological nature.

At the same time, Bible translation demands some profound anthropological research at each and every stage: it presents a text written centuries ago in a distant land to an audience which lived in a different milieu, sometimes so different that the main problem for a translator is not to understand the text itself but to find adequate equivalents in the receptor language and culture.

In the good old "missionary era" a century ago the main strategy (although not without exceptions) was to bring the reader as close to the original as possible. Yet even in those days "our daily bread" in the Lord's prayer could not be literally translated into languages whose speakers did not have bread as their basic food, so it became "our daily rice" in Chinese and "our daily fish" in Aleut. All that was done rather intuitively in those days, but now we have an extended theory on metaphor and its cognitive functions which allows more systematic and nuanced treatment of such issues[2]. Still, the very process of Bible translation was almost exclusively in the hands of theologians who would only occasionally allow for some cultural adaptations when they were forced to do so if they wanted to produce an intelligible text.

The paradigm changed in the middle of the previous century. This shift is primarily associated with the name of Eugene Nida and his colleagues who developed a profound theoretical foundation and a set of elaborate methodologies for Bible translators[3]. Now, linguists and cultural anthropologists have begun to dominate this field, and they have achieved a tremendous success. The main tendency has changed: now the text is rather brought to where its readers would be, the main concept being *meaning-based*

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2) First of all, cognitive linguistics based on M. Johnson and G. Lakoff, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University Press, 1980).

3) E. A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964); E. A. Nida and C. R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1969).

translation as opposed to the old *formal translations*. In a few words, the main point was to tell the modern reader exactly what the original author wanted to tell his original audience. This was called *dynamic* or *functional equivalence*.

E. Nida's merits can hardly be overestimated but the world has kept on changing. At the end of the previous century it was clearly felt that the approach which looked revolutionary in the sixties had become insufficient and one-sided. As it was formulated by T. Wilt, "When Nida and Taber published their popular book on Bible translation three decades ago, Bible translation consultants were almost exclusively white, male European and American Protestants. In the translation of non-European languages, the chief translators were often non-mother-tongue speakers attempting to learn as adults the culture of the potential audience. Church leadership in many parts of the world was dominated by foreign missionaries… Disciplines such as sociolinguistics, text analysis and pragmatics were in rudimentary stages of development; context-free analysis at the clause level and lower was the main focus of linguistics. Biblicists were giving relatively little attention to the literary unity of the canonized texts and the voices of interpreters from countries that were not technologically and economically dominant were hardly heard. The computer was unknown by most and unavailable to practically all"[4]. Needless to say, at each and every point this is no longer the case.

Those changes eventually led to the appearance of some newer approaches, the two most prominent being *relevance* and *functionalist theories*. They are based mostly on the theory of communication, and the venerable art of translation is understood as a special case of cross-language communication, along with other forms such as creative re-writing, oral story telling etc.

Relevance theory was introduced to the Bible translation studies primarily by E.-A. Gutt[5] who adapted and applied ideas proposed initially by D. Sperber and D. Wilson in the area of general linguistics[6]. It was based on the theoretical concept of cognition and insisted on translating scenarios, not propositions. It

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4) Timothy Wilt, ed., *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2003), 231.

5) E.-A. Gutt, *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation* (Dallas: SIL, 1992); Ernst-August Gutt, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* (Manchester and Boston: St. Jerome, 2000).

6) D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986).

also gave room for different types of translations, such as direct and indirect, and each type can be relevant in a particular situation. There are no more 'right answers' to translational problems with this theory; rather everything depends on a concrete situation.

This tendency is yet more visible with the skopos or functionalist theory, initially proposed by K. Reiß and H. Vermeer[7)], later developed and made globally known by C. Nord[8)]. Its application to Bible translation is demonstrated e.g. by L. de Vries[9)].

This theory tells us that every translation has a purpose (*skopos*) and is a function of that purpose; everything depends on who and what the translation is being done for. Equivalence is a conventional term, a translation is never equal to its original but can be more or less loyal both to the original and to the intended audience: it must present the text in a way that would be compatible with the author's intent. As for cross-cultural dialogue, this theory acknowledges that the conventional cultural world of the original is re-created in a translation and is not identical to the original cultural world.

These are the two most popular trends within Bible translation theory nowadays, and they are still talking mostly in terms of linguistics, anthropology and other humanitarian disciplines, hardly mentioning theological issues at all. But these are not the only models which are visible on the horizon. New approaches are still appearing, some trying to *domesticate* the text as much as possible (to bring it to the reader), others on the contrary, insisting on radical *foreignisation* of the Bible (taking the reader to where the original was).

On the domestication side, the so called *literary functional equivalence* (LiFE) model was introduced by E. Wendland[10)]. The main idea is that the Bible is literature and should be translated accordingly, imitating the discourse and the

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7) K. Reiß and H. J. Vermeer, *Grundlegung Einer Allgemeinen Übersetzungstheorie* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984).

8) C. Nord, *Translation as a Purposeful Activity* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997); C. Nord, *Funktionsgerechtigkeit Und Loyalität: Theorie, Methode Und Didaktik Des Funktionalen Übersetzens* (Berlin: Frank and Timme, 2011).

9) L. de Vries, "Bible Translations: Forms and Functions", *The Bible Translator* 52 (2001), 306-319; L. de Vries, "Biblical Scholars, Translators and Bible Translations", *Scripture and Interpretation* 2 (2008), 141-159.

10) E. R. Wendland, *Translating the Literature of Scripture: A Literary-Rhetorical Approach to Bible Translation* (Dallas: SIL, 2004).

poetic features of the original by the means available to the receptor language. For instance, a Psalm can be rendered in more or less the same way poems are composed in the receptor culture.

This approach is closely connected to what can be called *inculturation*: the tendency to bridge all the gaps between the source and the receptor cultures; one of the most prominent promoters of this idea is H. Hill[11]. It is quite clear that every successful communication is based on information and ideas which are common to the speaker and the hearer. Nevertheless, some information and ideas may only appear similar in different cultures. The concept of God as Creator, for example, may be present in animistic cults as well but usually this deity is understood as virtually inactive in the world as we know it. A translation in such a case should find a way to correct such a divergence between cultures; the correct understanding can be achieved by footnotes, supplementary material or 'expanded translation' which may look more like paraphrase than translation in the proper sense of the word. As one can easily see, this approach is anthropological by its nature.

The opposite tendency which is called foreignisation is, on the contrary, merely theological. Under the name of *essential literalness* it is promoted by L. Ryken[12] but one can say that this approach was practised already in the German translation of M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig, as well as in the French translation of A. Chouraqui. Ancient Greek versions known under the names of Aquila and Theodotion belong to the same type, in fact. In a sacred text, says Ryken, every word matters so one should translate not the propositions but separate words, and one should do so by using their closest natural equivalents.

This idea seems rather naïve and it does not provide any viable methodology of translation but it is rather popular with too many of our readers. The more traditional, the better, people say: a translator should not feed the reader with his own ideas, interpretation is allowed at linguistic, not exegetical level. The very existence of such an approach clearly shows that for many people, translating the Scriptures must differ radically from any kind of "secular" translations.

11) H. S. Hill, *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads: From Translation to Communication* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2006).

12) L. Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002).

There is indeed a place for various types of translation within newer models such as functionalist and relevance theories but what kind of versions might correspond to this demand, and what would be the theoretical and methodological background for them still remains unclear.

In addition to this, one can also notice that when Nida started developing his theory in mid-20th century, the translation field was dominated by missionaries with strong motivation and theological education who at the same time were not so well aware of the differences between languages and cultures, who often tended to expect from their audiences something "natural" and "universal" which in fact was highly cultural and conditional. Nida was struggling with this, and now the situation has been reversed since anthropology and linguistics have reached a completely different stage of development. Among modern Bible translators we would find many who know quite a lot about exotic languages and cultures but have rather naïve ideas about a "universal" theology that is shared by every reasonable Christian. Theological factors, however, are rarely discussed or even seriously considered when determining the basic parameters of a project.

2. Theology revisited by anthropologists

During my work as a translation consultant for the Institute for Bible Translation (IBT) based in Moscow I have witnessed many times that translational choices were made rather intuitively and later re-evaluated, sometimes extensively. For instance, in the Altay project (a Turkic language spoken in South-Western Siberia) we started with a rather literal approach, for it was a sacred text – and then the drafts were edited over and over again, to make the text more accessible to the ordinary reader.

The Altay New Testament was published in 2002, and the readers still saw it as a pretty high style translation. Ten years later it was decided that an audio version should be prepared, so for this purpose we needed to revise the text making it yet easier to digest. Now, a group of local believers insisted on immediate accessibility for exactly the same reason: it was a text that spoke about one's salvation, so even a simple shepherd high up in the mountains must

be able to get its meaning right away.

These believers were missionary oriented Baptists while those who insisted on the literal rendering ten years earlier belonged to the Orthodox church, rather conservative in its approaches. This dispute had a lot of theology involved; people looked at the same Scripture with different eyes, although they never articulated this and indeed hardly realised it at all.

Then, we decided that the printed version should undergo some stylistic editing without rewriting it; if it is not immediately understood by the shepherds we may think of another version for them (an Altay equivalent of the "Good News Bible") when we have resources available. Nevertheless, I had one more question at this point: are we sure we want to translate the entire Bible or at least the New Testament for those who barely read in their mother tongue at all? Yes, they enjoy speaking it and they value their cultural heritage which is mainly oral, but books are just not what they are used to, although they are technically literate. Would not it be better to retell the main narratives for them, omitting such semantically overloaded portions as, say, Ephesians? But there we would face another question of a theological nature: the role of the text of Scripture in a church. I would imagine that my Baptist friends would insist on having it in full, in written form, just because… just because it is the right way to do it! Will everyone share their conviction? The Orthodox may be quite happy with the portions read at the liturgy, as was the case with many other people groups.

Nevertheless, if anthropology receives a lot of attention from many researchers, theological approaches are still hardly visible in the scholarly literature. The only exception is a short series of articles by S. Crisp[13].

Crisp is talking about the translations destined for the conservative Christians who belong to the Eastern Orthodox tradition but what he says may be applied to some other audiences as well. The principle of *iconicity* that he promotes can give some room for translations different from the standard 'meaning-based' ones while avoiding the naivity of so-called essential literalness: an icon does not aim at reproducing the reality exactly the way we perceive it but is rather a

13) S. Crisp, "Icon of the Ineffable? An Orthodox View of Language and Its Implications for Bible Translation", *Bible Translation on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Authority, Reception, Culture and Religion*, A. Brenner and J. W. van Henten, eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 36-49; S. Crisp, "Sacrality, Authority and Communality as Essential Criteria for an Orthodox Bible Translation", *The Messenger* 6 (2008), 3-12.

symbol which allows for various interpretations, to a large extent determined by the tradition. What it means in practice, will be shown later on a few concrete examples.

Orthodox Christians are supposed to encounter Scripture primarily in the context of liturgy, meditation and prayer, so their preferred translation, in full accordance with the functionalist principles, must conform to these goals. At the same time, they live in the modern world like everyone else and cannot avoid discussions which take place in it. If the fathers spoke about the Bible in terms coined by Plato and Aristotle, why not to use the language of Derrida and Ricœur today? The Orthodox theology can be recognized as another kind of acknowledged subjectivity, and the church tradition as another interpretative community, if we want to put it in Postmodernist terms. One could also argue that iconicity as a principle corresponds to the cognitive approach to language.

As we have seen already, anthropology takes an important place in translational studies but theology mostly remains an uncharted area, so creating some sort of an 'iconic theology' of translation may help to correct this imbalance. It is still a dream rather than a reality but what can be taken as its basis? First of all, the Biblical accounts themselves. In many instances we see that for the authors of the Bible a name was not a conventional complex of sounds; giving a name to a person, a place, an object or an animal meant exercising control over it and sometimes even predicting its fate. At the same time, God refused to give his name to Moses saying in response to his request אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, a strange phrase which can be translated as "I am what I am" (Exo 3:14). The only true God cannot be contained in any particular name, for his own existence is beyond human control and human language.

This idea was enriched and developed in patristic thought, primarily, in the writings of St. Basil of Caesarea, especially in his work 'Against Eunomius'; he was supported by his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa who composed another work known under the same title. Arguing with Eunomius, an Arian theologian who insisted that words we apply to God are exact terms which can be clearly defined, Basil and Gregory came very close to the modern understanding of metaphor in cognitive linguistics, and this happened as early as the 4th century. They said that in describing the infinite and transcendent reality with earthly words, we are approaching it from a certain side, and are far from completeness

of expression. An icon is an attempt at exactly such an approach.

The writings of these two brothers are a common heritage for Christians of all denominations, but the eastern Orthodox tradition has something more to offer. These are the works of St. Gregory Palamas (14th century), who was confronting Barlaam, a humanist thinker of Greek origin. According to the latter, God was ultimately unknowable to humans, and any words applied to him were just randomly chosen tokens (an opposite extreme to the one demonstrated by Eunomius). Gregory insisted that although the *essence* of God was unapproachable for humans, he disclosed himself in his *energies* which could be received and described by people. This distinction eventually became central for Eastern Orthodox theology. As for the names of God, they can carry these energies, so evoking them means something more than just shattering the air with one's tongue. The theology of Palamas and his followers (known as Palamism) is quite complicated and this is not the place to discuss it any more detail but it is enough to say that to some degree it usually underlies theological discussions in the Eastern Orthodox world, much as the teaching of Thomas Aquinas does in the West.

These theological sets of ideas have a direct implication for the theory and practice of Bible translation. Basically, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa free translators from slavish literalness (since the names of God are only approximations but not terms) while Gregory Palamas does not allow for "translating just the meaning" (since the names do matter by themselves). If we follow both of them, we have to treat God's names as icons indeed.

Is not this something which is applicable only for translations being done for a rather specific use by a rather restricted audience? I think the iconic approach has more potential applications than just liturgy books for Orthodox believers. It may propose a sound alternative to the tendency of domestication that we see nowadays in translation, which some think goes too far. This is not to say that domestication or inculturation are intrinsically wrong but that they constitute only one option, not necessarily applicable in all cases.

New trends in translation studies have reactivated the old questions which have been there since the very first attempts at translating the Scripture, though modern translators have definitely proposed new answers to them. For instance, to what extent can specific cultural features of the receptor language and culture

be accepted in the text of the Scripture? “Rice” and “fish” are probably quite acceptable instead of “bread” as the most common food (although even bread is less generic nowadays than it used to be) but the answer is much less clear in more subtle cases. “Make the text as natural and understandable as you can” is a priority of course, but there may be a conflicting one: “Preserve the established tradition as much as you can”. Which one is more important in a specific case, and how much the other priority should be respected, depends on the specific situation. In any case, one’s own ideas about understandability may be pretty subjective, as well as one’s own perception of what constitutes a tradition worth keeping. In a word, we always tend to make the Bible say what we think it should say.

One of the hottest issues in Bible translation usually is terminology borrowed from other languages. In some form or another, the concepts of *righteousness* and *sin*, *feasting* and *grieving*, *divinity* and *humankind* are present in all human cultures but in each of them they are specific. For Muslims, for instance, *fasting* means not eating or drinking during daylight, for Orthodox Christians it means not eating or drinking certain kinds of food during many days in a row while in the Bible it meant not eating or drinking anything at all for a day or so. Which of these words can be borrowed from the vocabulary of other religions without distorting the message? To a certain extent, this question is about the national and specific versus the universal and global in Christianity, and any decision is inevitably a compromise.

Even when we think we already have a term in a language it may be the result of a certain development in a language which we may not be quite happy with. For instance, a nation of a Muslim background may have a word for *cross* but the connotations can be rather negative for it used to be a foreign (and often hostile) symbol. This is the case with the word *täre* ‘cross’ in the Bashkir language spoken between the River Volga and the Ural mountains. So in the Bashkir New Testament we decided to use a more neutral word *arqısaq* which carries no symbolic or historical overtones at all. It designates just a crossing of any kind (it was also the name for the constellation of Orion in the traditional culture). Languages with some Christian influence may be quite happy with loan words from the “missionary languages”, like Altay (the first missionaries came there in early 19th century) which borrowed the word *kres* from Russian *krest*

'cross'. Is this an example to follow in other cases like Bashkir? Probably not, because new loan words are usually not welcomed by our readers, who want to have everything in their own mother tongue which supposedly lacks nothing.

3. The name of God as a study case

The most prominent case no doubt, is the question how to translate the word 'God', especially for a Muslim audience. There is a hot debate in many cases: can a translation of the Christian Scripture use the word *Allah* which would be the best known word for the target audience? From the anthropological point of view this problem does not even exist: this word is present in the receptor culture, so why not use it? This is a theological issue: do we proclaim that Christians, Jews and Moslems worship the same Creator God (if we use it) or rather the opposite (if we do not)? Or, perhaps, by using it we want to assert that the biblical prophets and the apostles were Muslims before the Quran? And if we have in mind a positive answer only to one of those questions, how can we indicate to the reader which one exactly?

To avoid this controversy, some translations choose a neutral word, such as *Tanrı* in Turkish or *Dela* in Chechen. Unfortunately not every language has such a word, and even if it does, it may be regarded as 'pagan' by the target audience. I clearly remember a conversation with an Orthodox priest of Mari origin who insisted that in his language they had purely 'pagan' and purely 'Christian' words for all the spiritual concepts and ritual objects. There is hardly any language that functions this way and it seems too similar to the approach advocated by Eunomius and rejected by Basil and Gregory. Once again this issue could not be discussed without some theological statements. It is not enough to say that modern linguistics rejects such ideas: for people who have this sort of idea the Bible is a sacred text, and in sacred texts everything is different. Unless one has a sound reference to church fathers, one would never prove them wrong, and we do have such references, as was shown above.

With the word 'Lord' (יהוה/ κύριος) the problem is even more complicated. In fact, we have a whole list of questions here, which will be discussed with some reference to IBT projects.

Very few languages are blessed with a word like the English 'Lord' which can be applied both to people of high position and to God. Do we need two equivalents (God/Sir)? It would be good to keep the distinction but then we would need to decide in each and every case where Jesus is being addressed or referred to, whether the speaker professes his or her faith in him as the eternal son of God or is just being polite. For instance, in the Bashkir translation of the New Testament the apostles address Jesus before the Resurrection as *Hužam/Hužabıż* 'my/our Master' because they closely follow and obey him, while other people address him as *Äfändem/Äfändebeż* 'my/our Sir', but after the Resurrection those who believe speak about him as *Rabbi* (a Quranic name of God). However, using a name which is well known among Muslims may face objections but we deliberately do so to stress the unity of the two monotheistic religions (needless to say, the main word for God in our Bashkir version is *Alla*).

As one can see from these examples, the choice of a term alone may not solve the problem. In many languages natural forms of address contain pronominal suffixes as well: 'my Lord' etc. Many other politeness strategies may be involved, especially in languages like Chinese or Japanese where we find numerous degrees of politeness depending on age, sex, social position etc., and their usage is obligatory. Even most 'egalitarian' languages such as English do mark politeness, so choosing words and expressions which people use to address Jesus involves deciding what exactly they think of him. One would not talk to a wandering preacher the same way as one talks to the Savior of the world.

In English as in many other languages the word 'Lord' initially designated a man of great importance who ruled over other people. Can we use a word with a similar meaning for the heavenly Lord (*Huça* in Chuvash, *Biy* in Altay)? In the Tuvan translation another word was added to ensure the correct understanding: *Deergi-Čayaakčı* (Lord-Creator). However, Altay readers strongly disliked this option because the word *biy* in everyday usage is rather 'boss' than 'lord', and is also applied to arrogant people who think too highly of themselves. No wonder that people did not want to call God by this word. To add some anthropology on top of this theological discussion, one may argue that the idea of noble lordship is deeply rooted in the feudal history of Europe but is absent in the Altay culture: once free nomads, they later became citizens of a socialist state so loyalty to a sovereign seems to be a concept alien to their culture.

To avoid these problems one can easily revert to the solution which was common in some older missionary translations: if the word 'Lord' is absent from a language, use something different. Indeed, translators from the 19th century chose 'God' (*Tură* in Chuvash) or even 'king' (*Kaan* in Altay). This seems to work in many cases but losing one of the most important lexical distinctions in the entire Bible is definitely not the best solution, at least if we have the iconic principle in mind. Again, this option inevitably creates practical problems. I have seen a prayer book in Altay published in the imperial days, where the Lord was referred to 'King', but the Russian Emperor as 'High King' (*Ulu Kaan*) and this looked rather heretical!

As one can imagine, in the Altay project we had a major problem. Suddenly a proposal came to choose the word *Kayrakan* as 'Lord'. It was a word of unclear etymology widely used primarily by shamanists as referring to the only supreme deity, though Christians would occasionally use it as well. We decided that it was the best option we had for 'Lord' at least in certain contexts. The very usage of this term, however, received strong opposition from a local Orthodox priest, Ukrainian by origin, who insisted that the word was pagan and only the old word 'King' was worthy of attention[14]. This was a theological debate of course… with an anthropological flavor, though. "Altay people are just like children", said he, thus combining theological criticism of our translation with a rather paternalistic judgment about the values of the Altay culture in general. Rather typical for my country, I must confess.

Some translations choose to use transliteration for the Old Testament names (*Yahweh, YHWH, Jehovah* etc.) and Jehovah's Witnesses go even further to introduce it into the New Testament as well. It certainly adds more original flavor to the text but creates more problems than it solves, starting with the choice of the transliteration itself, so we in IBT never choose this option.

4. Theologians and anthropologists: rivals or friends?

Different theologies can also confront each other. In classical missionary

14) А. Реутский, "Не Кайракан, а Каан", http://www.miloserdie.ru/index.php?ss=20&s=36&id=3042.

translations, the traditional religious terms of a pagan culture were often used in a pejorative sense. A term for ancestor spirits, for example, may be used to refer to demons. This, however, may create a strong resistance among some representatives of the receptor culture as demonization of their original culture[15]. Using traditional animistic terms pejoratively may be labeled as 'cultural imperialism' etc. but in fact it has implications that are more than political. If, on the other hand, one were to take such words in a rather positive sense, thus linking the traditional animistic religion with Biblical monotheism, this would be an even more questionable theological statement. Perhaps the best solution would be not to use these words at all, which is what we do in most translations. This is just one example of a translational problem which can be solved successfully if we take into account theology as well as anthropology. Using just one approach would result in a one-sided translation which might be rejected for reasons that the translators never considered. Of course no one can guarantee that a balanced solution will be found and accepted by all in any case but at least we may try to be more sensitive to such issues.

One may think that most of these problems are relevant only for tribes living in jungles or deserts, far from modern civilization. It may seem that they are successfully solved by big nations with established literary traditions and several (or even many) versions of the Bible. However, the matter is not that simple. It is often said that nowadays Christianity is growing mostly in Asian and African countries, while it is in decay in its traditional European stronghold where the majority of the population is at least indifferent or embraces exotic practices and cults. Reshaping Christianity in order to answer the challenges of the modern world is for better or worse another visible trend in the West, and this tendency has its influence on the process of Bible translation as well.

The current problems of Bible translation have some clearly theological components so they should be studied, discussed and dealt with accordingly. After all, the heritage received from the church fathers may be regarded as another form of the cross-cultural dialogue which anthropologists talk about so much: the modern world in its variety and complexity engages in a conversation

15) See e.g. M. W. Dube, "Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo Into 'Demons' in the Setswana Bible (Matthew 8.28-34; 15.22; 10.8)", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999), 33-59.

with the early Christian tradition in order to define its own identity and to find modern answers for the old questions. To sum up, we are facing a situation which is fundamentally different from the one that was present in the “missionary era”, so theologians and anthropologists should become friends if they want to be successful as Bible translators.

<주요어>(Keywords)
Bible translation, theology, anthropology, skopos, iconicity.

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<Abstract>

Bible Translation between Anthropology and Theology

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This paper gives a brief overview of this new trend, based on the author's twenty years of experience in this field in Russia and neighbouring countries, first as a Bible translator and editor with the Bible society, then as a translation consultant with the Institute for Bible Translation in Moscow, Russia.

The area of Biblical studies used to be dominated by theology, but theology lost its central importance in the latter 20th century, replaced by linguistics, anthropology and other humanities disciplines. However, theology is slowly regaining its former importance under new circumstances and in a new way.

This shift is primarily associated with the name of Eugene Nida and his colleagues who developed a profound theoretical foundation and a set of elaborate methodologies for Bible translators. Those changes eventually led to the appearance of some newer approaches, the two most prominent being relevance and functionalist theories. This tendency is yet more visible with the skopos or functionalist theory, initially proposed by K. Reiß and H. Vermeer, later developed and made globally known by C. Nord. New approaches are appearing, some trying to *domesticate* the text as much as possible, others on the contrary, insisting on radical *foreignisation* of the Bible.

The principle of *iconicity* that S. Crisp promotes can however give some room for translations different from the standard 'meaning-based' ones while avoiding the naivity of so-called essential literalness. Anthropology takes an important place in translational studies but theology mostly remains an uncharted area, so creating some sort of an 'iconic theology' of translation may help to correct this imbalance.

The current problems of Bible translation have some clearly theological components so they should be studied, discussed and dealt with accordingly. To sum up, we are facing a situation which is fundamentally different from the one that was present in the "missionary era", so theologians and anthropologists should become friends if they want to be successful as Bible translators.