

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TRANSLATION

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STUDY OF BIBLICAL PHRASEOLOGY: GENERAL TASKS AND RESULTS

The purpose of the article is to show the acute necessity of the detailed investigation of biblical phraseology. It deals with the semantic, formal and stylistic peculiarities of biblical expressions. The article considers such ways of scientific research as the comparative analysis of Russian biblical phrases and their prototypes in the Bible, the comparison of Russian biblical expressions and those of foreign origin. The results of the investigation permit the author to find out the universal biblical phrases and in this connection to introduce the term *bibleme*. National original phrases have also been revealed.

Key words: biblical phraseology, biblical phrase, biblical expression, Russian biblical phrase, international biblical phrases, bibleme, national original phrases, cultures of Christian peoples.

It is virtually impossible to find a person who does not know what the Bible is. And if anyone has never read this great "Book of books" which was translated, as it is known from the authoritative sources, into more than 1800 languages of the world [1, p. 10] itself, they have certainly in any case, have read or heard at least something about it.

The word *Bible* derives from Greek *biblion*, meaning 'papyrus', and hence, 'papyrus scroll, or the book'. Then the collective noun for all the books of the Holy Scripture has started to be used in the form of neutral gender, plural - '*biblia*'. Roman writers started to use the word in the form of singular, feminine gender. It is the Latin word that was borrowed into Russian in the form of '*Biblia*'.

The books Old Testament are divided into canonical and noncanonical.

The Greek word *kanon* (as well as Semitic *káne*) originally meant a stick of cane or any straight stick. Hence the figurative meaning - anything used to straighten or correct other things (rule), or, in a more general sense, a kind of norm or example, including the word canon itself. The word 'canon' is also used in this meaning in the Russian language. The derived adjective, 'canonical' also coincides in meaning - 'conforming to the rule or procedure'. Consequently, canonical books - the books of the Holy Bible, recognized by the church as **spiritual**, i.e., containing the word of God.

All canonical books of Old Testament (38 in Russian Orthodox tradition and 39 in other versions) have been compiled in Classical Hebrew, with the exception of some small sections, written in Chaldean or Aramaic.

Russian Orthodox Church recognizes 9 non-canonical books. Although the Church does not deny that they have certain moral value and can be of use, they, in some cases express exclusively personal opinions. All of these books seem to have been written in the Greek language.

The New Testament consists of 27 books, all being canonical and written, except for Gospel of Matthew, in the Alexandria dialect of Greek. And only the Gospel of Matthew was written to the Siro-Chaldean dialect of Hebrew, the language, spoken by Jesus' contemporaries [2, p. 4-5].

Among the various translations of the Bible we should note two of the most ancient and authoritative - the **Greek** translation of the Old Testament, often referred to as Septuagint or LXX, i.e. the translation done by seventy translators. The translation is believed to have been done by 72 Jewish translators within 72 days in Alexandria in 3 century B.C. The translation was commenced by Ptolemy II Philadelfus [3, p. 43]. The second the **Latin** translation, of all the books of the Bible - Vulgata (4 century A.D.). Other important translations are the later ones - into **Russian** and **Slavonic** language.

Bible translation, first into the Slavonic, and then into the Russian language had to go through a series of dramatic events. Without going into much detail, we will only focus on the milestones.

The translation of the Bible into Slavonic language was first done by the two brothers-educators, Cyril and Methodius in the second half of the 9th century. Then through Bulgaria this translation was brought to Russia, where for a long time, people had access only to separate fragments of the book.

For the first time a complete copy of the Holy Bible was assembled by the archbishop Genady of Novgorod Veliky in 1499. The first printed Slavonic Bible, referred to as Church Slavonic Bible, was prepared to publication by prince Konstantin Konstantinovich Ostrozhsky (hence the name 'Ostrozhskaya Bible') in 1580-1581 and printed by Ivan Fedorov, the first Russian printer. The basis of our Slavonic Bible is the Greek translation, Septuaginta, as well as the Greek text of the New Testament.

The Russian synodal translation of the Bible has been done fairly recently, in the second half of the 19th century. This translation is called synodal as it has been recognized and approved by, the Holy Synod the highest authority in the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church. The authors of this translation as the metropolitan of Moscow and professors of spiritual academies. The translation was ready by 1876. The Hebrew text was used as source text, which, when needed, was checked against the Greek and Latin versions. The New Testament was translated from Greek and Slavonic.

Thus, in the printed version of the Holy Bible became available relatively late, in the 16th century, and still in Church Slavonic. Therefore all the metaphors, allegories and symbols of the book entered the language in their initial Church Slavonic variant. Most actively biblical phraseology entered the language from 16th to 19th century. This resulted in biblical phraseology retaining its archaic form which makes it quite different from the corresponding phraseological corpora of other European languages. Biblical phraseology entered the language in the time when the language of Russian language was emerging. And biblical phraseology in its turn poured into the language.

It is necessary to point out that neither Pushkin, nor Griboedov, nor Lermontov, nor Gogol have lived long enough to see the synodal translation of the Bible. Still, they knew the Scripture brilliantly (the Church Slavonic text obviously), masterfully used the biblical phraseology, actively using it both, in their writings as well as everyday life. You can guess that most of those expressions were Church Slavonic [2, p. 5-6].

During the Soviet times religious literature including the Bible was mostly banned and, consequently, understudied. The negative effect of the ban was intensified by active anti-religious propaganda. The result of this is a decline of the usage of biblical phraseological units (BP). Many of them became obsolete and non-understandable for the speakers of Russian, particularly if they retained obsolete words and archaic word forms. For example: *vziskuyushchie grada, vopiyat glasom veliim, sosud skudelny, stomakha radi, strakha radi iudeyska, sin persty, Ezhe*

pisakh, pisakh; Svoya svoikh ne pozhnasha etc. A lot of metaphors, symbols and catchphrases from the Bible, so common and popular in the Christian works fell out of usage.

However, in the past two decades, Russia has seen the beginning of the process of the return of BP into the Russian language and extensive usage of it in many spheres of life. In the Russian-speaking population emerged a genuine interest in the Holy Scripture, and the expressions from the Bible which have entered the language and become its integral part. One of the main tasks that biblical phraseologists have to accomplish is to carry out a comprehensive study of biblical phrases as well as to disseminate this knowledge among the speakers of Russian (see also [4, p. 40]).

Having been studying biblical phraseology for over 15 years, I have published over 60 articles on various aspects of BP. Most of these publications were widely discussed on various international conferences and conventions.

Main Trends in the Study of Biblical Phraseology

The study of structural, semantic and stylistic characteristics of biblical expressions makes it possible to make the following conclusions:

I. Structurally you can divide BP into two groups:

1. Non-predicative expressions, or phrases, i.e., phraseological units proper: *Koren zla* (the root of all evil), *sol zemli* (the salt of Earth), *bludny sin* (prodigal son), *zarit talant v zemlu* (bury talent in the ground), *vnesti leptu* (to make a contribution) *steret s litzta zemli* (to erase from the face of the Earth) etc. Into the same group can be included single-stressed and stylistically marked expressions with figurative meaning, and split-written articles, conjunctions and particles, eg.: *Vo imya* (In the name (of something)), *ni dushi* (not a soul), *ot lukavogo* (of evil), *pod spud, pod spudom, iz-pod spuda*, (under a bushel) etc. Such linguists as A.I. Molotkov, V.P. Zhukov, A.I. Fedorov, V.M. Mokienko, V.N. Teliya, V.I. Zimin view these expressions as phraseological units.

2. Predicative expressions, i.e. sentences, which in the form of a catchphrase provide guidance, instructions, advice, warnings etc. *Judge not, that ye be not judged. Do not cast pearls before the swine. Man shall not live by bread alone. He who digs a pit for others falls in himself. All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Honor thy father and thy mother* etc.

Alongside with biblical expressions, i.e. phrases and sentences, some scholars single out separate words which were initially used in Biblical contexts and acquire figurative meanings outside those contexts, eg. *heaven, hell, cross, Golgotha, prophet, Christmas, Resurrection* etc. Alongside with the biblical phraseologisms, these words are included into the group called **bibleisms**.

Among bibleisms-words there are a lot of personal names. *Adam, Eve, Cain, Noah, Solomon, Herod, Judas* etc. and toponyms (place names): *Babylon, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Jordan* etc.

In addition to the fact that bibleisms-words have the ability to form their own figurative meanings, they can still be part of biblical phraseological units. For example: *A paradise on Earth, paradise lost, sheer hell, to ascend Golgotha, Adam's, garment, the old Adam, curse of Cain, Noah's ark, Hamites, Herodian soul, Judas -the traitor, The New Babylon, trumpet of Jericho, star of Bethlehem* etc.

Biblical expressions which have entered the Russian language are very intricately connected with the Bible. However, biblical expressions are affected by such factors as numerous translations and usages.

II. *Link between the semantics of BPs with structural characteristics of biblical expressions shows a striking regularity.* Thus, predicative expressions have mostly moral semantics, whereas non-predicative expressions have the semantics of characterization. In other words, non-predicative biblical expressions do not simply name but also evaluate people, objects, actions, states, situations, etc.

III. *The connection and interdependence of stylistic and semantic characteristics of BP also seems obvious.* So, for example, the expressions given below retain the characteristics of bookish style and stylistic marking, eg. *white clothing, song of songs, a crown of thorns, road to Calvary, in much wisdom is much grief; all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword; Bethabara beyond Jordan boots (shoes) of his; turn knee* (before smb. or smth.).

It should be noted that the biblical phraseologisms are mostly bookish. This is largely due to the fact that, in Russian they are very often used in the archaic form, which is typical of BPs.

Of course, there are also ones which are characterized by varied usage contexts e.g. (*trouble <never> comes on its own; to drag smb's name though mire, servant of two masters, fiat lux!* etc.), and colloquial (*clasp hands; all polled the pair; to eat smb's bread in vain; God has given, God <and> assumed; windows of heaven have opened* etc.), and even slang ones (*in the birth suit, to ask for trouble*, etc.). However, they are significantly fewer in number than the bookish ones.

We can identify the biblical phraseological units the following way: They are quite regular, can be reproduced in speech and are connected with the Bible, retaining the expressiveness and emotional characteristics, as well as metaphorical, symbolic and allegorical characteristics.

You can say that, on the one hand, the biblical phraseology is part of the general system of Russian phraseology with all its differential and specific features, but on the other hand, the biblical expressions have a number of characteristics, mentioned above. These particular semantic, formal, and functional characteristics make it possible for the English phraseology to find its place in the phraseological system of Russian language.

Having compared Russian BPs and their biblical prototypes we have discovered, that these BPs undergo numerous transformations. It may be the extension of the general meaning of BPs, their desacralization and semantic shifts and inclusions, connotative transformations etc.

Let us, for example, consider the change of the expression *the spirit and the letter of the law*. In Russian, the meaning is the following - 'accurate and strict conformity, strict adherence to anything in both substance and form'. In the Bible this expression occurs repeatedly, with *the spirit of law* being interposed to *the letter of the law*. See, for example: "He [God] has given us the ability to be the servants of the new testament, 'not the letter, but of the spirit of it because the letter kills, but the spirit of the gives life' (2Cor. 3:6).

In the modern Russian language semantics in this expression, compared with the biblical text there is no confrontation between the spirit and letter of the law, between his essence (substance) and the form. The meaning of the expression is aimed not at the juxtaposition, but at the interaction and harmonization of the two sides of the phenomenon. So, for example, in modern mass-media you can see the call to observe the *the spirit and letter of the law*, and act in accordance with it, impose sentences in accordance with it, etc.

Quite often the change in the semantics of Russian BPs happened due to the process of desacralisation.

Since the Bible is the book of the Holy Scriptures, it is natural that biblical texts contain a large number of words, and expressions, perceived as sacred by the certain people. But, over time, everything, relating to the sacred sphere: quotations from the Holy books, ritual speech formulae, names of places, objects regulations, etc, becomes desacralized in everyday communication. As a result of this many biblical expressions significantly change their semantics compared with their biblical prototypes.

For example, BPs *to be in high spirits* (coll.) means in Russian 'to be jolly'. In the Bible how ever the word *spirit* has many meaning. One of them is the timeless essence of a human, the most senior and good, in him. *The spirit* - this is also a special gift, recieved from God. Hence *to be in high spirit* means 'stay in a state wisdom, foresight, knowing, be ready accept the word of God and to serve his will'.

In such a state we find John the Evangelist, whom God reveals the secret of the end of the world. John is to witness the great revelation: "I was in the *Spirit* on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet: The "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Rev. 1:10) The voice then tells him to "write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter" (Rev. 1:19)/ And then John saw that the "door was opened in heaven, and... said: Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. And immediately I was in the *spirit*: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne" (Rev. 4:12).

As we can see, in the modern Russian language the semantics of the expression *to be in the spirit* has undergone a significant change as a result of desacralisation. Only one positive evaluation component brings it together with the biblical expression.

Moreover, in Russian there are two very special BPs with a negative evaluation, which are the antonyms to the first expression - *be not in the spirit* (coll.) and *not be in the spirits* (coll, vulg).

As a result is desacralization the transformation of semantics of the biblical expression *to choose what is better*. This expression refers to the story from the Gospel, when Jesus "came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said." But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, Lord! don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me! the Lord answered, Martha! Martha! "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luc. 10:38-42). "*What is better*" means here 'salvation of the soul'. However, in the Russian language in semantics of the expression has undergone substantial changes.

In the first place, Russian has accumulated two meanings:

1) 'to take the most profit-making decision':

- In the end had *to choose the better* and, remain silent about it, if possible. (*G.I. Uspensky. Essays on the Times of Transition*) (Ocherky perekhodnogo vremeni);

2) 'choose a better share, a good job':

- Hey, Egor Petrovitch, I see you've chosen a- *better part for yourself*: Creaming off the cream of Europe, not attaching yourself to anything, a real man of pleasure". (*P.D. Boborykin On Loss*) (Na ushcherbe).

Secondly, in both of these meanings the emergence of irony is possible [5].

It should be noted that the emergence of ironic coloring in a sacred context, initially as a form of individual creativity and then as regular practice, results in the BP being desacralized and also in the emergence of a new meaning. An interesting example is the the transformation of expression *green pastures*, which refers to the requiem: "Let the soul of (name) rest in the place of God on his green pastures". Initially, this very BP, in the Bible, as well as in the Book of Psalms David says (The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in *green pastures*, he leads me beside *quiet waters*, he restores my soul. Psl 23:1-2) Compare:

- *In his dreams he flees away from our thoughts to the pgreen pastures, to the place where there are no papers, no ink, no strange persons, no uniforms where there is solitude, pleasure and coolness* (*I.A. Goncharov A Common Story*).

In another example we feel slight irony:

- *Andrey Antipovitch, being expelled from his home by his parents for lazyness, discovered the house of Egor Ivanovitch to be a a green pasture, beside the quite waters* (*N.V. Uspensky Correspondence clerk*)

In the following example, the irony is harsh, bordering on sarcasm (about irony and sarcasm see [5, p. 58-65]); the positive evaluation component changes to the negative:

- *Between the stove and door there is a hanger, on which hangs shmatter of some sort: Overcoats, fur coats, robes, covers of all kinds... over all of this one can see clogs of cotton wool and holes where lives the parasite, hungry for the body of an underfed seminarian which in that place of green pastures is in abundance* (N.G. Pomyalovsky. A Winter evening in Bursa). In the semantics of the expression implies the transition to a later variant: The place is yet pleasant, tranquil and rich, but not for the 'underfed seminarians', rather for the parasites eating their bodies.

With time not only the stylistic coloring and an evaluative component, but also the meaning of the BP itself has changed to the opposite: Now this expression means the place where one gambles, drinks and fornicates. For example:

- *He hardly lived at home, since he lived a life of Gypsydom, attended fairs, clubs, gambling dens and similar green pastures* (D.N. Mamin-Sibiriyak The Privalov Fortune) Or:

- *Nikolay Maksimivitch Pustokhin got into trouble... He got drunk as a log, and in such drunk a state, having forgotten his family and service roamed all the green pastures, having totally forgotten about his family and job* (A.P. Chekhov. Trouble).

It is clear that what is meant is not solitude and rest. But now the meaning of the BP becomes antithesis (see also [4, p. 46-47]).

Finally, in Russian there are such expressions, which are not in the Bible, but which are related to the biblical images or stories indirectly. These are nation-specific, properly Russian BPs. These include speed, such as *Sing Lazar, without a moment's doubt, stone blind, (getting drunk), Christophany, Hamites, etc.*

Thus, biblical expressions in Russian, have gone a long and way from Bible to our days, having experienced the impact multi-stage translation, many interpreters, as well as the impact of history, culture and mentality of the people of Russia. They have changed its form as compared with their prototypes, both in form and in content. These changes can be minor, barely visible, but quite often very, very significant.

Finally, we have carried out a comparative study of Russian and foreign BPs.

One can obviously detect striking similarities, between the BPs in different languages, with the reason for this similarity being quite obvious. The explanation is probably the common source of the units, i.e. the Bible, hence - common imagery and subjects. Moreover, cultures of Christian nations share common religions, moral and ethical values. As a result, we can speak of the so-called biblical universals in these languages. Let us call them **bibliems**.

Biblieme – is as kind of generalized abstract invariant meaning, derived from a common biblical subject or image, common for all languages and nations sharing Christianity as a religion. For example, the biblieme *Judas* can be used to express betrayal, *Herod*, - brutality, *Lazarus* (see parable about Lasarus, Luc.16, p. 19-21) - poverty and illness, *manna from heaven* - something desired or wanted, *cross* - the unavoidable hardships, etc.

Still, despite the common grounds that bibliemes share, their linguistic expression may vary from language to language. In other words, each biblieme is expressed in each and every language in a unique way, and the difference may be both structural and semantic.

Let us consider, for example, what various biblical expressions associated with the well-known character Lazarus are associated with in various languages. It is the story of the vary Lazarus who was lying covered with scabs by the gate of a very rich man and would have been glad to eat the crumbs from the table. But the rich man - alas! Gave nothing to him. The story of poor Lazarus we can see in the Gospel of Luke [16, p. 19-21].

G.A. Lilitch points out that 'comparing the usage of one and the same homonyms in certain languages, you cannot but notice, that despite the general typological similarity, there exist partial semantic differences' [6, p. 46].

In Russian, as well as in many European languages, there is a biblical catchphrase *as well as poor Lazarus* (or *poor Lazarus*). In the basis of these phraseological units lies the biblieme 'poverty'.

In Italian there is the word *lazzaroni*. It is the name, used to refer to the poor, earning their living through odd jobs or begging [7, p. 428; 8, p. 86; 9, p. 166]. As we can see, the biblieme of this word is also "poverty". But at the same time in Italian the word *lazzareto* - hospital (also derived from Lazar), which, was apparently, borrowed into Russian from French in the late 18th century, means "a small hospital in a military camp or a temporary small mobile hospital, in contrast to the hospital" [6, p. 86; 7, p.161]. 'Etymologists suggest that there might be a possible contamination proper names Lazar and Nazaret, as the first known hospital (for those, suffering from plague) which opened in 1423 in Venice, and had its name in the honor of St. Mary - *di Santa Maria di Nazaret*. Gradually, the initial *N* turned into *L* under the influence of *lazarro* 'beggar' (the biblical name *Lazarus*) [8, p. 47].

In the word *lazaret* (*clinic*) we can see the second biblieme of Lazarus ('disease'), is the basis of the Spanish expression - *mal de San Lazaro*, literary, 'St. Lazarus' disease', i.e. leprosy [10, p. 372]. In French the name of Lazarus became the symbol of a person suffering from leprosy [11, p. 7].

Moreover in the biblieme *lazaret* the first biblieme ('poverty') is also traceable. This mobile hospital was initially designed for soldiers, i.e. military people at the bottom of the army hierarchy, who were consequently the poorest and socially most insecure.

Alongside with the fact that there are quite a lot of semantic universals for BPs there are also a lot of BPs have emerged in a particular language and are nation specific. Quite often these expressions are connected with the biblical subject or images only indirectly. It means that between the biblical image and a BP there is a 'mediator' of some kind. It can be a historical, social or cultural phenomenon. For example, the expression *to sing Lazaus*, which is quite different from the international BP *poor as Lazarus* is also a reference to Lazarus, but a specific Russian one. The thing is that this parable was immensely popular with Russian beggars, who loved to sing a hymn of Lazarus, warning the people from the vice of greed. Those beggars however were no saints and pursued their own material gains. Their inability to conceal their presence was immediately reflected in the language, with the phrase acquiring the meaning 'to lament the life you live; ask for help; begging for something'. It is not difficult to notice that this meaning has nothing to do with the parable from the Gospel. This BP emerged as a result of a specifically Russian phenomenon at a certain historical period.

The presence or the absence of a particular BP in any given language depends on the 2 factors: "general selectivity and historical and cultural factors" [12, p. 56]. Selectivity is the subjective reason. It is very difficult to say why one and the same reality is interpreted differently by the phraseological systems of different languages. There are also numerous cultural and historical factors. One of them was demonstrated above in the example with *to sing Lazarus*.

Another reason for the uniqueness of many Russian BPs is their Church Slavonic form. The modern Synodal Bible translation into Russian was done quite late, in 1876. Before that the services were administered in Church Slavonic and the initial translation of the Bible had been done in that very language. Therefore, until the end of 19th century many biblical expressions entered the Russian language and were absorbed by it in the form of BPs in Church Slavonic.

There are still quite a few tasks in the phraseological study of biblical expressions. For example, one can do a more detailed comparative study of BPs in Russian and other European languages. The results of these studies can be used in teaching Russian as Foreign Language, as well as a theoretical and practical basis for the compilation of bilingual dictionaries of BPs. The work in this sphere has just begun and the dictionaries of BPs as few in number and small in content.

Finally, it is write books on the role of biblical expressions in Russian and European cultures. Possible reader of such books might be school teachers, teaching "Foundations of Orthodox

Culture", or for students studying social studies, as well as for a wide range of readers interested in history of Russian language and culture of Russian and European peoples. For example, I have recently published a book "Biblical Phraseology in Russian and European Cultures", which can serve as an answer to some of the questions posed.

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