

may perhaps be of service in other languages, confronted with similar problems.

But it remains true that no word, outside the Christian context, can possibly fully represent all that is now contained in *elpis* for the Christian. The differentia of Christian hope is surely not in the strength of its desire for future good. It may be found partly in the nature of the good that is desired, unmistakably spiritual in its content and unlimited in its scope in that it depends on eternal fellowship with God. But it is above all in its assurance of fulfilment, based on the Lord Jesus Christ and His decisive revelation, in life and death and resurrection, of the faithfulness of God, His Father, and our Father. The Christian's hope for the ultimate future does not depend on his interpretation of current events, nor is it any form of 'wishful thinking'. It is what it is because it accepts Jesus Christ's revelation of God as sufficient for time and for eternity. As someone has said, "We trust Him for to-morrow because we are obeying Him to-day, and find Him completely reliable".

Thus the translation of the word *elpis* cannot be achieved by the exercise of mere linguistic skill; there must be understanding of the content of the Christian conception of *elpis* as found, often without the word, in the New Testament, and in living Christian experience. The blend of desire and confident expectation which is Christian hope depends on the Christian faith in Jesus Christ, Author and Finisher of hope no less than of faith—and any words used in translation will need that Christian context to give them their fulness of meaning.

Interpretations of 'Hope' in Arabic

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The religious environment of the Arabic language makes the interpretation of some theological terms rather involved. Today Arabic is the mother-tongue of some two million Christians, most of whom are members of the surviving Coptic Church of Egypt. Fair-sized communities are to be found scattered across the countries of the Near East (including 'Iraq) and to a less extent North Africa. The stark fact that these groups now include refugees from what was Palestine increases the provenance of Christian Arabic. These people have been driven by force of circumstances they never controlled to the verge of *despair* instead of *hope*. This psychological experience should be taken into account in considering the use of the term in ordinary life amongst the all too many Christians in dispersion; for we remember it was to Christians in dispersion in the first century that much of the New Testament was addressed.

Arabic is spoken by twenty-five times as many Muslims as Christians. The Jews who use(d) it belong mostly to 'Iraq, Egypt and Yemen. On the other hand the Arabic-speakers of the world of Islam are but a sixth of the total of Muhammad's followers.

Other factors present themselves. These fifty million Arabic-speaking Muslims use religious terminology held in common with Christians, but

with a different background and emphasis. This feature is noticeable when an examination is made of the use of the word(s) for 'hope' respectively in the New Testament and the Qur'ān. While some ideas in this connection are held jointly by Muslims and Christians, the further influence of Judaism must not be discounted,—in this case greater over Muslim than Christian thought. The third of the monotheistic religious systems of the world is thus in the debt of its predecessors, but has always been aware of its genius to give a fresh slant or directive to theological terms, a phenomenon traceable in the Prophet and the Qur'ān.

Islamic Arabic too has expectedly given to other languages words of religious import which were possessed of an already accepted meaning prior to incorporation. Thus in Asia, Persian, Urdu, Turkish have Arabic phraseology embedded in their speech and greetings. Though in some cases cultural renaissance has caused a revival of pre-islamic words, it is the religious vocabulary that will be the last to go, so long as Islam is in the ascendancy. The same is true of Indonesia, while in Africa there are Arabic elements in Hausa, Kabyle and Swahili.

There has therefore been a reverse process as between Islamic and Christian Arabic. Just as the former obviously benefitted other tongues used by Muslims, so did the first Arabic-speaking Christians in and around Arabia welcome the terminology of its sister languages, Aramaic and Syriac. Such words, some in ordinary use—one is in the Lord's Prayer—are recognisable today as not being Arabic in origin. These words too came into Arabic with an already accepted connotation, some of them having an inheritance of meaning derived from a Semitic mould of thought and speech, beautifully akin to the way in which the New Testament writers, in fact our Lord Himself, expressed themselves. For the Muslim, whose mother-tongue is Arabic, the inheritance from Christian sources will be considerably blurred or overlaid with Islamic interpretation or, as perhaps in the case of 'hope', somewhat limited in scope and outreach.

In the Greek of the New Testament a single word embraces all the shades of meaning of which the English 'hope' is as capable. *Elpis* and *elpizo* have no rivals. The Hebrew of the Old Testament however has some half-dozen words rendered by 'hope' in the Authorised Version.¹ Arabic comes between the two with a couple of main synonyms—*rajā'* (verbal root *rajā, yarjū*), and *'amal* (verbal root *'amala, ya'mulu*). When the idea shades off into 'expectation', another word is employed,—*intazara, yantaziru* (increased form of the root 'to see'). This is never employed in the New Testament to render any occurrence of *elpizo*. In Egyptian Colloquial another word *'asham* is common. It is connected with a root meaning 'to be dried up', so that its origin may not be Arabic and it can be construed 'eagerness' or 'covetousness' as well as 'hope'. This word is infrequent in other Near Eastern Lands, only being used by those who have come under Egyptian influence through residence and then returned home. In Palestine and other countries the ordinary all-purposes word *rajā'* is the one adopted. An increased form of this

¹ H.D.B. ii, 412-3.

root is common with the implication of 'begging a favour from someone' or 'seeking pardon for something', in both of which ideas is a basis of hope. Lastly, it is worth mentioning a phrase soon picked up by visitors to Arab lands—a phrase as common in the colloquials as in Classical. *In sha Allah* (God willing!), corrupted into *inshallah*, comes more often than not to have the implication of 'I hope'; though with a different stress on Christian lips from Muslim. It might be said by some to occupy a middle place between '*amal* and '*rajā*'. For so far as cultured Islam is concerned there seems to be a subtle difference between the two; which may be one reason for the avoidance of the former in versions of the New Testament (absolute in that of Van Dyck completed in 1857). '*Amal* represents 'hope' for something reckoned unattainable, unlikely but much desired. It is related to an optative particle generally rendered 'Would that!'. '*Rajā*', however, carries with it the same incentive of desire, coupled with the inference that the object or quest is readily susceptible of attainment. It reaches beyond the bounds of probability into the realm of the confidently anticipated. '*Rajā*' is likewise related to an optative particle which goes further than 'perhaps' and means something like 'it may very well be and I do hope so'. (The Palestinian has a colloquial parallel to this in *balki*, which is of Turkish derivation).

In this subject of 'hope' the Qur'ān is much more rewarding than Tradition (*Hadith*). There are only two instances of '*amal* in the Qur'ān, one of which clearly bears out the previous interpretation. In this the discussion centres round the unbelievers, who are best left to 'divert themselves' with fond hopes. They can enjoy indulgence in wishful thinking. The second reference emphasises the uncertainty of life and suggests that good works are more likely to gain reward than worldly possessions and are therefore well-worth expecting. There may be fruition. Who knows? There is no occurrence of the verbal form '*amala*'.²

With regard to the noun '*rajā*' there is some comparison with the phenomenon in the Gospels. Just as they have no mention of '*elpis*', the Qur'ān has none of '*rajā*'. The passive participles of the simple, and one of the increased forms do appear.³ In the first instance the Prophet Sālih is described as one in whom reasonable hope had been vested. The second case refers to people 'deferred' for the command of Allah. Otherwise the twenty-four or five cases of the verbal form are all in the incomplete mood and have natural reference to the future. There is no instance of the verb being used in a past sense. With few exceptions the references are to the last day. A man meditating on this 'hopes' for a meeting with his Lord; or for a mercy from Him; or for a bargain that will not come to nought. There are those who did not always 'hope' for reckoning. Those who do not hope will not be pardoned. Just a few instances offer the meaning of 'expect'. But there are at least fifteen which have indubitable reference to the last day.⁴ There is an element of looking forward with desire to this meeting, something that is eminently

² Surah 15. 3; 18. 47.

³ 11. 62; 9. 107.

⁴ 18. 111; 29. 5; 33. 21; 39. 9; 2. 218; 4. 103; 71. 13; 17. 28. (Examples where the phraseology differs slightly).

possible. This, however, is only the case with believers. For unbelievers there is an Old Testament parallel in Job 27 : 8, "What is the hope of the godless?" It would appear that for this teaching Muhammad had absorbed material that had come to him both from Jewish and Christian channels, owing more to the former, as the burden of his preaching in Mecca on Judgment and Resurrection would imply. The occurrences of *intazara*, of which there are seven, always to be rendered 'expect', also have reference to the vindication of believers, who can afford to wait expectantly. Here, however, it could be held that the reference might well be to a possible vindication in this world. "Wait then! I too will be of those who wait".⁵

Connected intimately with this strong hope and expectation of the coming of the last things is the place given in Islam to the doctrine of the *parousia* of Jesus Christ. In this Orthodox Islam firmly believes, though the doctrine can scarcely be said to have Quranic roots. It must have found the way into the Islamic system through Christians who adopted the new religion; but it goes to prove that the doctrine was very much alive amongst those Christian groups, which soon came under the sway of Islam, whether or not the individuals chose to give their allegiance to Muhammad. (The Islamic belief in this respect can be examined in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* or other works).⁶

This feature of Islamic theology taken over as it was from the Christian doctrine of the Second Coming may be regarded as in some sense redressing the balance of the Quranic picture of an attenuated Christ. It thus belongs to the realm of 'hope', both in the orthodox Islamic expectation of the Return of Christ along with Muhammad; and the sincere 'hope' that because of it, there will ultimately take place a re-examination of the Person of Jesus Christ, so long neglected in the Muslim world. Clearly allied to this doctrine of the last things is the cult of Mahdiyyism.

Before passing to the consideration of the Arabic words in the New Testament which render *elpis* and *elpizo*, a glance may be taken at two germane matters. Two other words call for mention. Just as the opposite of 'hope' is 'fear', there is the antithesis of *optimism* and *pessimism*, which are translated into Arabic by *tafā'ul* and *tashā'um* respectively. Both words seem to derive from roots connected with the provision of omens. 'Pessimism' is also related to the word for 'left', the unlucky hand. The fact that there is no middle term between the two, as is the case with so much Semitic thinking, means that in the case of 'hope' as well, ideas are as distinctive and clear-cut. There is nothing opposite 'hope' except 'fear'. Further, there does not appear much direct Tradition material dealing with 'hope', though in some of the Traditions the idea may be there by inference, just as the Gospels are redolent with it without the actual word occurring.

One of the greatest of Muslim thinkers has, however, redressed the balance in his monumental work, *The Revival of Religious Sciences*.

⁵ 7. 70.

⁶ e.g. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, ii. 525. The most recent discussion is in *Bridge to Islam* (Bethmann) 60-62. The Quranic Reference in 43. 61 following is the somewhat shaky basis.

Al-Ghazālī was a teacher and traveller, known in the west as Algazel. He passed away in 1111 A.D. In his book there is a lengthy disquisition on 'Hope and Fear'.⁷ In the course of this both the Qur'ān and the Prophet are quoted. Some phrases of *Al-Ghazālī* are reminiscent of St. Paul. He has been called "A Muslim Seeker after God", so it should be no surprise to find unconscious Christian influences or the skeleton of possible New Testament quotations in some of his and probably others' writings. The material on 'hope' is divided into three sections—on the 'Reality of Hope; the Excellence of Hope and the Benefit of Hope'. If the limited conception of the Qur'ān is here further developed, the *Revival of Religious Sciences* (true to its name) reveals, too, a thinker prepared to disregard the boundaries of prescribed research. It is doubtful how far the scholarship of mediaeval times is a living thing today amongst the rank and file of Muslim adherents, whose outlook on the problem of 'Hope' is still practically confined to the teachings of the Qur'ān. This is partly due to the overpowering sense of the absolute will of God Almighty, as expressed in the *inshallah* of everyday life, which results in an attitude of such submission to that Will, that the freer exercise of the faculty of hope tends to be ruled out. Islam did not 'take over' enough of 'Christian Hope'.

For six centuries prior to the Rise of Islam the Christians of the Near East had been adopting Greek words into their everyday speech. The process continued well into the period of the Umayyad Dynasty in Damascus.⁸ Some words came into Arabic through Syriac, others direct like *drachma*, or *philosophos*. The ones through Syriac belonged to the religious vocabulary. But 'hope', despite its thousand years of history before the Christian era, was not one of these. The Arabic words noted were not *arabized* but pure and native. One of these, general in the Qur'ān and Islam, is more so in the New Testament. Out of the fifty-one occurrences of *elpis*, the word is rendered by *rajā'* in fifty instances, the exception being Acts 24 : 15, where it is rendered by 'trust'.⁹ *Elpizo* is usually translated by *rajā*. But on four occasions it appears in different forms of the root for 'trust'—but *rajā* too can mean 'to expect'¹⁰—and once by *wathaqa*, which has the meaning of 'being confident'. The English versions mostly retain 'hope' here, Moffatt being an exception. This leaves us with twenty-three cases of *elpizo* rendered by *rajā*, the most familiar word, whether the circumstances of use be theological or conversational.

It should, however, be stated that in the New Testament there are cases where the interests of Arabic construction have demanded that the noun should be employed instead of the participle and *vice versa*. This makes no difference to the main thesis, for *rajā'* and *rajā* in seventy-three out of eighty-one instances of the occurrence of *elpis* and *elpizo*, are used in reference to all circumstances, with the exception

⁷ *Al-Khauf war'Raja'*. A translation of this is in course of preparation by the Rev. W. McKane, M.A., B.D., of the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Glasgow.

⁸ 661-750 A.D.

⁹ Root *wakala*; so too Jn. 5 : 45, 1 Tim. 6 : 17, 1 Pet. 1 : 13, 3 : 5.

¹⁰ e.g. 2 Cor. 8 : 5.

of Luke 23 : 8, where an increased form is used in the sense still current in Palestine of 'hoping for a favour from someone'. The two other Lukan instances are equally instructive, since in 6 : 35 Arabic would support the interpretation of *apelpizontes*¹¹ as "expecting nothing in return", (as is the meaning of the previous verse). In 24 : 21 it is correct to use *rajā*, for the Crucified Christ did redeem Israel in spite of the attitude of the pair on the way to Emmaus.

The use of *rajā'* and *rajā* bears out the use of the term in ordinary life certainly amongst Christians and many Muslims at the present time. Where *elpizo* occurs in correspondence, chiefly St. Paul's, but, too, in the smaller letters of St. John, the natural way to translate would be *inshallah*¹² (only in letters it reverts to its classical form). The thirty-nine cases where there is some kind of theological connotation attached to the word *could not be represented by 'amal*. They are all within the realm of probability or certainty, with a vogue very much wider than in the Qur'ān. There are seven or eight verses where 'hope' is a quality in the present world; that which the mystics of Islam sought to attain in the successive stages of the progress of the soul.¹³

All that the New Testament has meant by 'hope' can be expressed in this Arabic noun and verb, corresponding in Christian essentials to the Greek used by St. Paul and St. Luke and 'Hebrews' and St. Peter — from the idea of simplest expectation to the Pauline declaration of "Christ our Hope". Where He is concerned the Expectation is always 'favourable'.

¹¹ There is no attempt to render the opening syllable; the idea may never have occurred to the translators.

¹² There is a different background to this oft-used phrase as between Christian and Muslim, the former perhaps being somewhat nearer to James 4 : 15. The Christian feels at times that he knows already what the will of the Lord is, and so hopes to share in accomplishing it on his own volition, but his Muslim friend suffers rather than does the will of Allah.

¹³ Nicholson: *The Mystics of Islam*, 256, note.

Smith: *Readings from the Mystics of Islam*, 3.

The Doctrine of Hope, however little appreciated, is fundamental in Christian thinking; it was developed in Islam as the need was felt. Avicenna, however, did consider 'a hopeful disposition' to be an influence on the bodily state. (Gruner: *Canon of Medicine* 214).

The Concept of Hope among the Bantu

C. M. Doke

INTRODUCTORY

The ideal of Bible translation is to present accurately to the people what the text of the original says, in language understood and appreciated by the people. It is obvious that, to the Bantu of Africa, many concepts expressed in Holy Scripture are new or foreign; and in rendering them the translator is faced with several possibilities. He may adapt a word