

I cannot do better, in conclusion, than quote from Alexander Hetherwick. When referring to a coined word for 'conscience', he wrote:²¹ "Gradually this word has been Christianised, and is now understood in its new application as standing for 'conscience'". And when referring to the word used of 'sin', he wrote:²² "The word has taken on an ethical meaning, and been baptised into the vocabulary of prayer and devotion". I do not like the use of the word 'baptise' here; but I agree with the general import of Hetherwick's statement.

²¹ *The Gospel and the African*, p. 113.

²² *ibid.* p. 114.

Hope: A Brief Study from the Standpoint of a Translator into Tonga

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In the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* I find the word 'hope' defined as a combination of desire and expectation. In the course of my studies in the Tonga language and allied Bantu dialects of South Central Africa, and especially while engaged in work on the translation of the Scriptures, I have long sought for a word that would exactly fulfil this definition of hope, but have been unable to find one. This is not to say, however, that one cannot by careful choice of words express in Tonga the thoughts the English word is used to convey, or translate with considerable accuracy passages where Greek or Hebrew equivalents occur in the Scriptures. Some of the potentialities of the language in this connection are indicated below.

Let me begin this brief study by a rather amusing, but none the less instructive, reference to the difficulties sometimes encountered by educated Africans when they attempt to use the word 'hope' in speaking English. An African colleague in the ministry remarked to me early one Sunday morning, "The weather is cold and windy today; I hope there will be but few people in church". His meaning was, of course, "I do not think, I do not expect, I do not anticipate, that there will be many people in church". His wrong use of the word 'hope' represents a very common mistake, arising from the identification of the English word in question with the Tonga word *syoma*.

This verb *syoma*, together with the corresponding noun *lusyomo* and sundry other cognate and derivative forms, is the word that springs immediately to one's mind when asked on the spur of the moment to give the nearest possible equivalent for the English verb 'hope'. Its primary meaning, as indicated in my last paragraph, is 'to expect or anticipate' the course of events in any given situation. If one asks, for instance, "Is So-and-so coming today?", and the person interrogated has any sort of grounds for thinking that the answer to the question is in the affirmative, he will reply, *Ndasyoma* (I think so, I expect so, I believe so).

In the sense of the word just referred to, *syoma* would appear to be merely a synonym for *yeeya* (think, believe, be of the opinion that). Sometimes, in point of fact, the word is that and nothing more. Frequently, however, it means much more than this, and when used with reference to the future definitely carries with it the suggestion of desire and perhaps of purpose as well as of mere anticipation. The following illustration, quoted from the writer's *Practical Introduction to Tonga* makes this clear. A poor man who possessed one solitary ox, had hoped in course of time to improve his position and be the owner of at least two. Unfortunately fate seemed to be against him, and even the one he did possess died. In talking over the situation with a friend he was heard to remark, *Ndakali kusyoma kuti mwakali njoojana basune bobile, pele lino ndasyomonona*. (Last year I was hoping that in time I should have two oxen, but now I have lost hope). Here the concept of anticipation combined with desire certainly finds expression in the verb *syoma*, and the opposite incidentally in the reversive form of the verb *syomonona* (lose hope).

Used thus, *syoma* certainly seems to come very near to being an equivalent for the Greek *ἐλπίζω* and is accordingly used very appropriately in the Tonga New Testament in such passages as the following:

Nakuti mwaabila abo mbomusyoma kuti balamupilusizya, mujisi kulumbwanzi ino?

If you lend to those from whom you hope receive, what credit is there in that?

(Luke 6 : 34).

Ndilasyoma kuzookuswaya taakooyula amazuba.

I hope to visit you before very many days have passed.

(1 Timothy 3 : 14).

The examples cited above indicate that there is normally no serious difficulty in Tonga in expressing the thought of 'hope' in verbal form. When we come to the cognate noun, however, things are not quite so easy. In addition to the uses already noted, *syoma* may also mean 'to trust, confide in, commit oneself to'. In this sense it is used in the Tonga New Testament, in John 3 : 16 and elsewhere, to translate the Greek *πιστεύω*. From this use of the word one passes easily to the derived 'neuter' or 'potential' form of the verb, *syomeka* (to be trustable, worthy of confidence, faithful), with the cognate adjective *-syomesi* (faithful). Cf. the Tonga translation of 1 Corinthians 1 : 9—*Wasyomeka Leza, oyo iwakamwiitila mucilinga ca-Mwanaakwe Jesu Kristo Mwami wesu* (Faithful is God, who has called you into the family of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord). The same concepts of trust, trustfulness and trustworthiness centre also around the cognate noun *lusyomo*.

It will be seen therefore that it is not easy in Tonga to draw any rigid distinction between hope and faith. The difficulty comes out especially in the classic passage (1 Corinthians 13 : 13) that speaks of the three great permanent elements of the perfect life—faith (*πίστις*), hope (*ἐλπίς*) and love (*ἀγάπη*). *Lusyomo* is the obvious rendering for 'faith', and we are left to find another word for 'hope'. When the writer

was engaged on the translation of the Epistles, long and careful consideration was given to the choice of this word, and a decision ultimately made in favour of *bulangizi*, an abstract noun from the root *langa*.

The primary meaning of the simple verb *langa* is 'to look, look at, regard'. Derivatives of this verb include the 'applied' form *langila* (look for, await, expect) and its causative form *langizya* (cause to look for, give grounds for hope). The derived noun *bulangizi* thus denotes the expectant, hopeful attitude of mind.

Let us look at a few examples in the New Testament. In Acts 23 : 6 (the hope of the resurrection of the dead) and 24 : 15 (I have hope towards God, as they also have,...) we have fallen back upon the use of *syoma*, but in 26 : 6 (I stand judged for the hope of the promise of God made to our fathers) we render *Ndaima kubetekwa nkaambo kakulangila cisyomezyo...*, the *kulangila* here being the infinitive or verbal noun of *langila*, denoting the act of looking for, expecting or hoping for something. In Acts 27 : 20 (all hope of being saved was cut off) we have again fallen back on *syoma* in the phrase *twaleka kusyoma* (we ceased to trust or hope), and the word occurs yet again in 28 : 20 (for the hope of Israel) where we use the phrase *nkaambo kakusyoma mbuli ba-Israyeli* (for trusting, hoping, as Israelites do). In Romans 4 : 18, which speaks of the faith of Abraham, "who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations", we have used both the noun *bulangizi* and the verb *langila* in our attempts to tackle the difficult phrase *παρ' ἐλπίδα ἐπ' ἐλπίδι*, and have rendered the first part of the sentence *Nibwakamana bulangizi wakacili kulangila...*, literally "When hope finished, he was still hoping..." *Bulangizi* or the cognate infinitive *kulangila* also occurs in our rendering of such passages as Romans 5 : 2 (rejoicing in hope of the glory of God), 1 Corinthians 9 : 10 (he that plougheth should plough in hope).

The limitations of Tonga idiom in this connection often necessitate the use of phrases in which the thing hoped for is given rather more prominence than the abstract notion of hope. Thus in Galatians 5 : 5 "the hope of righteousness" becomes *bululami mbutulangila* (the righteousness which we look or hope for); in 1 Thessalonians 5 : 8 "the hope of salvation" becomes *lufutuko ndotulangila* (the salvation we look or hope for); and in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13 "others which have no hope" becomes *bamwi babatajisi ncobalangila* (others who have nothing which they hope for).

We have used *bulangizi* to express the abstract notion of hope in such phrases as "a living hope" (1 Peter 1 : 3), "That your faith and hope might be in God" (1 Peter 1 : 21), "consolation and good hope" (2 Thessalonians 2 : 16). Our rendering of these passages seems to read idiomatically enough, but some 'Christianisation' of the content of the word will no doubt be needed before it conveys to Tonga readers all the meaning intended by the New Testament writers.

The etymology of our Tonga word *bulangizi* calls to mind that very expressive Greek word *ἀποκατάδοxia*—waiting with outstretched head—used by St. Paul in Romans 8 : 19. The Tonga word *langila* is in fact actually used in our Tonga New Testament in the verse in question, but

it is used to translate the verb in Paul's sentence (*ἀπεκδέχεται*, awaits). For the noun that forms the subject of his sentence we have the Tonga rendering *ludunamino*, a very intensive word that seems to rival almost the Greek word itself in its vivid suggestiveness of the outstretched head.

Old Testament translation is still in its infancy where Tonga is concerned, but we should find no insuperable difficulties in translating the various Hebrew words rendered by 'hope' or some synonymous word in the English version. It is interesting to look at these words with some of the points mentioned above in mind. In Hebrew, as in Tonga, it is not possible to draw a hard and fast distinction between hope and faith; cf., for instance, the occurrence of *batach* in Psalm 16 : 9 (My flesh shall rest in hope), quoted in Acts 2 : 26. The primary meaning of *y ch l* (the root of *tocheleth* used in Psalm 39 : 8 and other passages) is 'to await, expect', showing some similarity to Tonga *langila*. Interesting also is the etymology of *tiqvah* (Job 4 : 6, etc.); the root *q v h* seems to have meant originally 'to twist or stretch', and the word would thus be expressive of the tension of expectation: cf. what I have said above about the Greek *ἀποκαρδοκία* and the Tonga *langila* and *dunamina*.

In closing this brief study there comes to my mind an instance in which I have heard the word *syoma* used. I was visiting the local African hospital with an African ministerial colleague, and his last remark to a patient we visited was, *Kamusyoma bulyo*, "Just keep trusting (or hoping)". In his mind, though unexpressed in words, I am sure was the thought of God and of the Christian hope. As I said at the beginning, and I trust have shown in these notes, it is not impossible to 'get across' to our Tonga people something of what that hope means, notwithstanding the fact that there is not in Tonga any one word that could unhesitatingly be included in a dictionary as an exact equivalent of the English 'hope' or the Greek *ἐλπίς*.

Lingala and Tribal Languages in the Belgian Congo

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Some weeks ago I had to look for nails and screws in the station store here at Yalsmba and curiously opened a large wooden chest left by earlier missionaries. It was full of New Testaments. Students, scholars and other folk on the station and in surrounding villages are constantly demanding fresh supplies of New Testaments so that I never have enough in the book store to last for any length of time. But these copies were of no use to us. They were published in HESO—the language of a small tribe living around Basoko at the confluence of the Aruwimi River and the Congo—and the present generation here can neither speak nor hear that tongue; they want their scriptures in Lingala, the lingua franca of the area.