

immaturity, he generally considers them elsewhere in the epistle to be believers. Moreover, there is no indication in the context that Paul here singles out an unbelieving segment in the Corinthian church that needed to be reconciled to God in terms of experiencing a Christian conversion.

In light of these observations, there appears to be no good reason to view 2 Cor 5.20 as directly addressed to Paul's Corinthian audience. Rather, Paul here describes the general nature of his apostolic message of reconciliation. To paraphrase the verse, "We, the apostles, plead [with our respective audiences], 'Be reconciled to God.'" English translations should accordingly be corrected and delete the personal pronoun "you" that is usually supplied after "we urge" or "we plead." The statement should rather be rendered, "We plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God.'"

## APPENDIX

### Major English Translations of 2 Cor 5.20

#### *English*

#### *Version*

#### *Translation*

NASB	"we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God"
NIV	"We implore you on Christ's behalf"
RSV	"We beseech you on behalf of Christ"
NRSV	"we entreat you on behalf of Christ"
KJV	"we pray you in Christ's stead"
NKJV	"we implore <i>you</i> on Christ's behalf"
NEB	"in Christ's name, we implore you"
CEV	"We speak for Christ and sincerely ask you"
NLT	"We urge you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you"
NCV	"We speak for Christ when we beg you"
GNB	"on Christ's behalf, we beg you"
REB	"we implore you in Christ's name"
NAB	"We implore you, in Christ's name"

KNUT HOLTER

### Should Old Testament "Cush" be rendered "Africa"?

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A question eventually facing any Bible translator is how to render geographical names. John A. Thompson simply answers: "Well-known places should usually be given their modern names, not their Hebrew or Greek names."<sup>1</sup> However, this approach creates new problems. What is a well-known place, and what is a modern name? Geographical names do not live their lives in a vacuum. On the contrary,

1 J.A. Thompson, "Bible geographies and atlases and their use in translating," *The Bible Translator* 32 (1981) 431-437, here 431.

they reflect their historical, political, and even ideological setting, and as such any modern name may imply connotations that are not present in its biblical predecessor. Biblical Jerusalem, for example, could probably be considered a well-known place. But what is its modern name, is it Yerushalayim or is Uo Al Quds?

These problems facing the modern translator are not new. The ancient translators, such as those Alexandrians responsible for the Septuagint, had to deal with similar problems. The world map of 3rd century B.C. Alexandria was probably not the same as the world map of 6th century B.C. Jerusalem or Babylon, and, as far as geographical names are concerned, some discrepancies between the Greek and Hebrew versions of the Old Testament are therefore inevitable and understandable. It is certainly also understandable that these discrepancies are reflected in modern translations: partly because the world map of the modern translator differs from that of 3rd century B.C. Alexandria as well as that of 6th century B.C. Jerusalem or Babylon; but partly also because the modern translator finds that several of the national and political entities that are now present in what used to be Old Testament Israel, Judah, and their surroundings, have chosen ancient and ideologically pregnant names that do not necessarily correspond to the names and borders of the ancient times.

The African nation Cush, which is referred to a number of times throughout the Old Testament, could be used as an illustration of some of the geographical problems facing the modern Bible translator. In the translation history of the Old Testament, from the Septuagint on, Cush has traditionally been rendered "Ethiopia". However, since the geographical position of the modern state of Ethiopia only marginally corresponds to that of ancient Cush, other suggestions, such as "Sudan" or "Nubia", have been made in recent years, and have found their way into a number of modern translations. A more radical suggestion has quite recently come from a Nigerian Old Testament scholar, Professor David T. Adamo, who argues that Old Testament Cush should be rendered "Africa". Adamo's suggestion has, as far as I know, not yet found its way into any translation of the Old Testament, and I will therefore, give it some attention.

### **Cush—in history and in the Old Testament**

First, some words about historical Cush and the Old Testament portrayal of Cush.

The African nation Cush, which appears in Assyrian, Egyptian, and Greek sources, as well as in the Old Testament, has a history which can be roughly divided into three periods.<sup>1</sup> In the first period, throughout the 2nd millennium B.C., Egypt eventually managed to establish some sort of military control over the areas south of the first and second cataracts on the Nile river, referred to as Cush. Agriculture and trade were encouraged, and large amounts of gold, grain, cattle, incense, ebony, ivory, and slaves from Cush seem to have played a major role in the Egyptian

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<sup>1</sup> For a survey of the history of Cush, see D.B. Redford, "Kush", in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4 (1992) 109-111. For further reading see W.Y. Adams, *Nubia. Corridor to Africa*, London 1977; B.G. Trigger, *Nubia under the Pharaohs*, London 1976.

economy. To govern these areas, an administration modelled on that of Egypt was developed, headed by the office of a viceroy.

The second period, approximately from the 10th to the 6th centuries B.C., is characterised by civil war and decline in Egypt. This enabled Cush first to gain independence, and then eventually, in the 7th century B.C., to conquer most of Egypt and develop into a great power stretching from central east Africa to the Red Sea in the east and to the Mediterranean in the north. The third period in the history of Cush is then a history of decline and withdrawal; from the mid-7th century B.C., when the Assyrians drove the Cushites back into central east Africa, to the 4th century A.D., when Cush was finally defeated by the kingdom of Axum.

From our perspective, as translators and interpreters of the Old Testament, it should be noted that Cush experienced its political greatness in a period close to the period when most of the Old Testament literature originated. It is therefore to be expected that the literary portrayal of Cush in the Old Testament somehow reflects this political greatness. A brief survey of the Old Testament portrayal of Cush certainly confirms this.

*Geographically*, Cush is thought of as far away. It is the huge land south of Egypt (Ezek 29.10), representing the very south in the Old Testament map of the world (Is 11.11; Zeph 2.12; 3.10), even being the border of the mighty Persian empire, which stretched from India to Cush (Esth 1.1).

*Anthropologically*, Cush is connected with black and tall peoples. The Cushites are depicted as "tall and smooth-skinned" (Is 18.2), and a proverb asks rhetorically: "Can the Cushite change his skin or the leopard its spots?" (Jer 13.23).

*Politically*, Cush is known for its military abilities, and thereby its potential as a coalition partner. Judah is warned against trusting in Cush instead of Yahweh (Isaiah 20), but Cush can also be of assistance to Judah (2 Kgs 19.9; 2 Sam 18.21-32).

*Economically*, Cush is connected with wealth; the merchandise of Cush is well known (Is 43.3; 45.14; Dan 11.43).

### **From Cush to "Ethiopia", "Sudan", "Nubia", and "Africa"**

The Old Testament conception of Cush as a great and mighty nation south of Egypt, inhabited by black peoples, corresponds to some extent to the views of ancient travellers from other countries. The Greeks referred to these black peoples from east and central Africa as *aithiops* (compare "Ethiopia")—which probably means "those with burnt faces", whereas the Arabs, a millennium later, talked about *bilad al-sudan*—that is, "the land of the black men". The Graeco-Roman world was well acquainted with the existence of black peoples from east and central Africa, and Graeco-Roman sources often refer to Ethiopia and Ethiopians.<sup>1</sup> Examples from the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. are Xenophanes and Herodotus. Herodotus travelled widely in North Africa; in Egypt he went as far as Aswan (cf his Books II and III). His writings contain interesting observations concerning the history, culture, and religion of the Ethiopians, as well as their physical characteristics. According to Herodotus (II.22), the Ethiopians "are black by reason of the heat."

Xenophanes combined observations concerning the religion of the Ethiopians and on their physical characteristics, remarking that "The Ethiopians say that their

<sup>1</sup> For a most useful analysis, see F.M. Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in antiquity. Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman experience*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1970.

gods are stub-nosed and black, the Tracians that theirs have light blue eyes and red hair.”<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, when the Alexandrian translators of the Septuagint in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. had to find Greek counterparts to the Cush of the Hebrew Old Testament, “Ethiopia” and “Ethiopian” were natural choices. This rendering has been followed by most translations, from the Vulgate, through (for example) the King James version, up to the Contemporary English Version (US 1995, UK 1996); the latter, however, has a footnote reading: “The Hebrew text has ‘Cush’, which was a region south of Egypt that included parts of the present countries of Ethiopia and Sudan.”

In recent years some translations have exchanged “Ethiopia” for “Sudan”. Good News Bible/Today’s English Version did so in its first edition. However, in the 2nd edition (US 1992, UK 1994) it went back to “Ethiopia”, with a footnote referring to a Word List entry which reads: “**Ethiopia** The ancient name of the extensive territory south of the First Cataract of the River Nile was Cush. This region was called Ethiopia in Graeco-Roman times, and included within its borders most of modern Sudan and some of present-day Ethiopia (Abyssinia).”

Others, such as the new Norwegian (1978) and Danish (1993) translations, have chosen “Nubia”, whereas the New English Bible varies between “Nubia” and “Cush”. This latter option, a transliteration, has also gained some influence, and is chosen by the New International Version and the German *Einheitsübersetzung* (1984).

Hesitation between these various options is also reflected in resource material published by the United Bible Societies (UBS). One example could be found in the UBS Handbook on the Book of Amos, where Jan de Waard and William A. Smalley argue that it is “approximately correct” to render Cush in Amos 9.7 as “Ethiopia”, but that it is also possible, “but not quite as correct”, to render it “Sudan”.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, in the UBS Handbook on the Book of Psalms, Robert G. Bratcher and William D. Reyburn admit that “the territory occupied by the modern country of Sudan more nearly corresponds to the territory south of Egypt occupied by ‘Cush’”, yet they still argue that Cush in Ps 68.31 should be rendered “Ethiopia”.<sup>3</sup>

A third example of this hesitation is found in a 1981 article in *The Bible Translator*, where John A. Thompson argues that “Sudan” is far better than “Ethiopia”, since Cush according to Ezek 29.10 “was immediately south of Egypt, that is Nubia or the north Sudan, not the modern Ethiopia which is at least 500 miles from the borders of Egypt in the highlands of east Africa.”<sup>4</sup> A fresh and probably unexpected approach to these questions has then been made by the very productive Nigerian Old Testament scholar, David T. Adamo, currently professor of religious studies at Delta State University in Abraka, Nigeria. In an article published in 1992, Adamo argues that the Hebrew Cush should be rendered

1 Fragment 16, Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* vii.22.1. For an introduction, see G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical History with a Selection of Texts*, Cambridge 1971, 163-181.

2 J. de Waard and W.A. Smalley, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Amos*, New York 1979, 180.

3 R.G. Bratcher and W.D. Reyburn, *A Translator’s Handbook on the Book of Psalms*, New York 1991, 590-591.

4 Thompson (1981) 432-433.

"Africa".<sup>1</sup> The same idea is also expressed in several of his previous works on what he calls the African presence in the Old Testament.<sup>2</sup>

Adamo first makes a brief survey of the role played by Cush in Egyptian and Assyrian sources and in the Old Testament, consistently emphasising aspects favouring an African localisation of Cush.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, he examines Ethiopia in the Graeco-Roman sources, boldly suggesting that the nation called Ethiopia by the ancient writers includes "all the modern territory [sic!] of the continent of Africa."<sup>4</sup> Thirdly, having claimed that both "Cush" in the Ancient Near Eastern sources and "Ethiopia" in the Graeco-Roman sources to some extent refer to Africa, Adamo concludes that Old Testament Cush should be rendered "Africa".<sup>5</sup>

### ... and back to Cush

Two kinds of problems arise from Adamo's suggestion. First, to render all the Old Testament references to Cush as "Africa" would create some translation problems. It would open endless discussion of whether all the Cush texts in the Old Testament actually refer geographically to Africa. According to Adamo, "Everywhere the word 'Cush' is used in the Old Testament with a clear cut identification, it refers to Africa."<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, one could argue that there remains a number of Cush texts where an African localisation is at least questionable.

A further translation problem arises from the fact that the Old Testament uses Cush both as a proper name for individuals and as a name of a people and nation; hence it is difficult to be consistent. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and a number of modern translations distinguish between "Ethiopia" as the name of the land and nation, for example in Gen 2.13 and Zeph 2.12 (Heb 3.10), and "Cush" as the name of an individual, for example in Gen 10.6 and Zeph 1.1, whereas all these texts, according to Adamo, should be rendered "Africa".<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, to render Cush as "Africa" would also create some hermeneutical problems. Throughout this century, the very term "Africa" has developed ideologically pregnant connotations, both politically (for example in the term "pan-Africanism") and theologically (for example in the expression "African theology"), and a rendering of Cush as "Africa" would bring these connotations into the Old Testament texts. On the one hand, texts such as Gen 2.13, where Cush is related to the Garden of Eden, and Amos 9.7, where Cush and Israel are equated, would probably be experienced positively, and would strengthen the concept of a close relationship between Africa and the Old Testament. On the other hand, texts such as 2 Chr 14.8-14, where Cush is depicted as an enemy of Israel, would create difficulties. The hermeneutical problems already facing contemporary Egyptian and Palestinian readers of the Old Testament when they identify themselves with

1 D.T. Adamo, "Ethiopia in the Bible", *African Christian Studies*, 8/II (1992) 51-64.

2 See also D.T. Adamo, *The place of Africa and Africans in the Old Testament and its environment*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Baylor University, Waco, Texas 1986; "The African wife of Moses: An examination of Numbers 12:1-9", *Africa Theological Journal*, 18 (1989) 230-237; "The African queen (I Kings 10:10-13, II Chronicles 9:1-12)", *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 7 (1990) 14-24.

3 Adamo 1992, 51-52.

4 Adamo 1992, 52-57.

5 Adamo 1992, 59-60.

6 Adamo 1992, 51.

7 Adamo 1986, 79, 94, and 209; also his "The black prophet in the Old Testament", *Journal of Arabic and Religious Studies*, 4 (1987) 1-8; "Ancient Africa and Genesis 2:10-14", *Journal of Religious Thought*, 49 (1992) 33-43; "The Table of nations reconsidered in African perspective", *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy*, 2 (1993) 138-143.

the ancient Egyptians, Philistines, or Canaanites, that is, enemies of God's chosen people in the Old Testament, would then suddenly be transferred to the whole of Africa.

In the light of these considerations, I would argue that the best solution for the translator is to let Cush remain "Cush"; that is, to avoid the problems of finding a modern equivalent such as "Ethiopia", "Nubia", "Sudan", or even "Africa", and just transliterate it. Adamo would certainly oppose this, arguing that the translator should "avoid meaningless words which could not be readily understood by the common readers".<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, I fear that the costs of rendering Cush with "Africa" would be greater than the benefits.

Still, Adamo has an important point, and in my opinion his suggestion clearly deserves further attention. On the one hand, I would argue that Old Testament translations should inform their readers, in footnotes or glossary entries, that Cush in most cases refers to an African nation that is well attested also in extra-biblical sources. On the other hand, I would hope that Old Testament scholars, in Africa as well as in the West, would take up Adamo's suggestion, and further analyse the phenomenon he has identified as "the African presence in the Old Testament".

DAVID J. CLARK

## MINORITY LANGUAGE STATUS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS BIBLE TRANSLATION<sup>2</sup>

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### Minority languages

The expression "minority language" is often used loosely, and covers a wide range of situations. On a purely statistical level, it could be applied to any language spoken by less than 50% of the population of a given country (or indeed a smaller territorial unit). Thus it is possible that a language which is a majority language in one country may be a minority language in another, for example Swedish in Finland, or French in Switzerland. Often the term "minority language" is used with the unspoken presupposition that there is a "majority language" in the country in question. While this is often true, it is by no means always so, and different types of situation should be distinguished. Examples could be taken from many parts of the world, but for the purposes of this paper, are limited to areas where the author has some first hand experience.

### All languages as minority languages

At one extreme is the situation in Papua New Guinea. In a population of about four million people, there are over 800 indigenous languages spoken. No indigenous language has more than about 100,000 speakers, so none comes anywhere near to being spoken by 50% of the population. Thus all the indigenous languages of the

1 Adamo 1992, 59.

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