

это тело, и то, что родилось от Духа – это Дух. Не удивляйся, что я сказал «Вам нужно родиться свыше.» Дух, как ветер, который дует там, где хочет; ты слышишь его шум, но не знаешь, откуда и куда он дует. То же и с каждым, кто родился от Духа.»

From the beginning of its activity the Group has maintained scientific contacts with the United Bible Societies.⁴ With the assistance of the United Bible Societies the Group has become acquainted with the most recent progress in textual criticism of the Bible and the theory of Bible translation. The Group is ready to continue its collaboration with the United Bible Societies, and hopes that the Societies, on their part, will be able, through their contacts with the Leningrad Bible Group, to understand fully the specific nature of past and present problems of Russian Bible translation and to achieve an accurate understanding of existing Russian Bible translations.

⁴ In particular, the members of the Group have had fruitful consultations with Dr. Eugene A. Nida, members of the UBS Europe regional staff, with the Rev. Esko Rintala of the Finnish Bible Society and most recently with a UBS Vice-President, the Rev. Prof. Matthew Black.

K. I. LOGACHEV

THE PROBLEMS OF RUSSIAN BIBLE TRANSLATION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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In 1956 *The Bible Translator* published (Vol. VII, pp. 98–101) the English translation of some excerpts from an article by A. Osipoff in the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* (Russian edition, 1955, No. II, pp. 55–62). The title of this translation was “More About the Russian Bible”. As was indicated by the translator, Dr. D. A. Lowrie, “The article is largely based on a book, *The Centenary of the Russian Translation of the Bible*, by Prof. I. E. Evseev, St. Petersburg, 1916” and Osipoff, “instead of presenting his own arguments, . . . quotes with approval the book published forty years ago”.

Unfortunately, the way in which Osipoff uses quotations leads to a complete misrepresentation of Evseev's opinion of the so-called “Synodal” Russian Bible translation. The reader of the article and its translation might think that I. E. Evseev was wholly in favour of this translation, but in fact his position was quite different.

I. E. Evseev was the greatest Russian biblical scholar of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century¹. He was the founder, organiser and leader of the

¹ On his life and work, see *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* (Russian edition), 1971, No. 12, pp. 64–67; 1972, No. 8, pp. 76–77; 1973, No. 2, pp. 79–80; and 1974, No. 1, pp. 77–79.

Commission for a Scientific Edition of the Slavonic Bible (commonly known as the Russian Bible Commission) which began its work in 1915. One of the problems studied very seriously by the Commission was that of Russian Bible translation.

On 31 January 1916 the Commission held its annual meeting in which the highest Russian hierarchs, professors of the Petrograd Theological Academy and many guests participated. This representative meeting heard and approved I. E. Evseev's report "The Centenary of the Russian Translation of the Bible". This report,² in its published form, was the book quoted by Osipoff.

In his report I. E. Evseev rated the role and significance of Russian Bible translation much more highly than had been done before. The creators and publishers of the "Synodal" translation thought that they had only to solve the problem of a text for private reading, but I. E. Evseev wrote: "The centuries will pass. By what criteria will our present Orthodox understanding of the Bible be defined? It will be defined, not by a book written by an individual representative of our church or of theological thought, but in the main by the most important monument of our national Christianity, i.e. by an authorized Russian Bible translation. In history this translation will bear witness to the depth and distinctive features of our understanding of the Eternal Book."³

From this point of view, the "Synodal" translation "is sufficient for the elementary need of edifying reading, but no higher need can be satisfied by it."⁴

In support of his opinion, I. E. Evseev wrote: "The Old Testament part of the Russian Bible translation is prepared on the basis of the Hebrew and Greek texts which were combined in a mechanical way. No attempt was made to achieve an organic unity. Compare our translation with the Hebrew and Greek texts, and you will see that it does not correspond, on the whole, either with the first original, or with the second. Our translation is an artificial text, and it differs even from the artificial Slavonic text which it is intended to explain. The unity of these two different original texts might be accepted on only two grounds: (1) if it could be shown that it was possible to recover, from the historical development of these two texts, a genuine original text represented by the Russian translation; (2) if—without such proof—it was stated exactly that the Christian faith (or an important part of it) would suffer if these two texts were not combined. But in reality neither of these conditions is met. The Russian Bible text made on the basis of this mechanical unity does not reproduce the distinctive features either of the Hebrew or the Greek text. The present Russian Bible text cannot be considered as an historically stable Russian Bible form, i.e. a form that might be handed on to our descendants also."⁵

At the same time I. E. Evseev discussed the language of the "Synodal"

² I. E. Evseev, *The Centenary of the Russian Translation of the Bible*, Petrograd, 1916 (in Russian).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37, 38.

translation. He emphasized that "the distance between the language of the Russian Bible and that of our modern literature and society is as great as the distance between our modern language and that of Derzhavin⁶. Already when the Russian Bible translation was begun . . . and under Alexander II, while it was going on, its language was not the living Russian language . . . In the course of time the creators of the translation elaborated a purely bookish, slavonizing language, with expressions taken entirely from the Slavonic translation . . . The backward, old-fashioned bookish language of the Russian Bible translation did not want to take into consideration the golden age of the Russian literature." I. E. Evseev characterised the "Synodal" translation as "dry, obsolete" and "impersonal"⁷.

In 1917 the Commission edited I. E. Evseev's pamphlet addressed to the Pan-Russian Church Council⁸. I. E. Evseev emphasized here that "the Russian Church is faced by many unsolved questions related to the Bible"⁹ and appealed to the Council to consider these questions. The pamphlet indicated that the Russian Church needed to create a Russian Bible translation corresponding to new requirements, and that the language of the present translation was "heavy", "obsolete", "artificially mixed with Slavonic", and "absolutely inadmissible language from pre-Pushkinian times"¹⁰.

Finally, on 28 January 1918, the Commission discussed I. E. Evseev's report "The Creative Powers of the Bible" and decided to ask the Pan-Russian Church Council again for a decision on some problems of the Holy Scriptures, and particularly on the acute problems of the Russian Bible translation mentioned above.

Such was the real attitude of Russian biblical studies (and particularly of I. E. Evseev) to the so-called "Synodal" translation at the beginning of this century.

⁶ 18th century Russian poet (ed.).

⁷ I. E. Evseev, *The Centenary of the Russian Translation of the Bible*, pp. 39-40, 41.

⁸ I. E. Evseev, *Council and Bible*, Petrograd, 1917 (in Russian).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.