

**A Conference Report: ‘Symposium on Language and Style in Bible Versions: A West Slavic View’
(1 July 2022, Catholic Theological Faculty,
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The annual international symposium on Bible Language and Style at the Charles University Catholic Theological Faculty drew together, for the fifth time,¹ scholars interested in past and present Bible versions throughout the West Slavic world. The participants speaking Polish, Czech, Slovak, Upper and Lower Sorbian soon found a common language over issues of their shared interest and quite a few possibly got inspired in their further research.

The four blocks interleaved with discussions dealt with linguistic, philological, dialectal, stylistic and exegetical topics. One of the intermissions provided the opportunity to introduce a new section at the Faculty Library devoted to Czech Bible versions. About 150 volumes exhibit the abundance of the Czech Bible tradition. The ceremony participants got the rare opportunity to almost touch the treasured *Prague Bible* incunabule of 1488, which the owner, the Catholic Theological Faculty, keeps in safe deposit otherwise.

I

‘Polish Bible Versions and the Development of the High Style’

Prof. dr hab. Stanisław Koziara² identified the high style as the common background of Polish versions. The high style is crucial for languages.³ Literal Polish was exposed to it in 16th cent. It was formative for the language. The style is marked by literalness. The verbatim approach was taken by *Wujek’s Bible* (1599), held on by *Millenium Bible* (1965) up to the present, and on a Protestant line, upheld by *Gdańsk Bible* (1635) through to *Warsaw Bible* (1975), again up to now. In this, the Polish Bible style is ecumenical. The word-for-word method is generally deprecated. Still, Polish acquired many idioms, structures and figures of speech from it. In 1572 (*Nesvizh Bible*), Polish could have developed a more creative, syncretic Bible style but chose not to.

As Czech experienced a similar formative exposition, we are reminded we should not despise verbatim translations too quickly. At least in Bible translating, there are two norms Bible translations are evaluated by. Translators and

¹ The 4th symposium was reviewed in *AUC Theologica* 2021/2:206–211, the 3rd in *AUC Theologica* 2020/1:197–202.

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³ See more in Roland Meynet (2001) *Wprowadzenie do hebrajskiej retoryki biblijnej*, WAM, Kraków; and Meynet (2005) *Język przypowieści biblijnych*, WAM, Kraków.

committees have to find their own way between the literal Scilla and the literary Charybdis.

'Simple Past Tense in Old Czech Psalters'

Mgr. Hana Kreisingerová, Ph.D., and Mgr. Kateřina Voleková, Ph.D.,⁴ map the development of the Czech system of aspect and tense. The decay of simple past tenses being replaced by the then emergent compound perfect is documented in the earliest Czech Bible versions. The late 13th cent. until 1487 is covered by Psalm versions. As Czech Bible redactions are four, also Psalters distinguish four versions: (1) *Wittenberg Psalter* (late 13th cent.) revised in *Poděbrady Ps.* (1396), (2) *Clementine Ps.* (early 14th cent.) rev. in *Ps. of the Canons* (1380s), (3) *Boskovice Bible* (14/15th cent.) rev. in *Padeřov Bible* (ca. 1410), and (4) the 1st *printed Psalter* (1487). They were translated mostly from the Latin *Psalterium Gallicanum*. The simple tenses available in the Czech of the day were (a) aorist simple past, (b) imperfect imperfectives for past progress, state or quality, possibly also iterative or collateral action, and (c) imperfect perfectives for past iterative action. The aorist tenses died out from the text till the 3rd version, the imperfects faded away before the 4th version. Though the compound past outnumbered the simple tenses and grew slightly toward the end of the 14th cent., it was possible, as late as then, to select between tenses independently from the Latin structures.

'Iotation Loss as Evidenced in Matthew of the Bible of Dresden'

Mgr. Anastasija Rožkova⁵ followed the progressive loss of iotation (Slavic palatalization) of the short [ɛ] /<ě>/ in the Matthew text of the earliest known Czech version of the complete Bible (1365–1375). The evidence for palatalization is well observable. When the frequent <ie>/<ye> occurred after /j/ (less often /ř/, /č/, rarely /c/ [ts], /š/), it was simplified to <e>, but in the majority of instances, the iotation was preserved. Sparingly, <ie>/<ye> appears not to represent /<ě>/. Specifically, <nie>/<nye> can be seen for /ně/[nɛ], where <i>/<y> made a diacritic to n→ñ/. It was found 50 times (and twice for <dy> and <di> for d→d/ [ɟ]) in Matth. The apparent irregularities were abstracted from as the spelling was unsettled.

These last two contributions (and quite a few presented at earlier symposia) remind the translators and expositors of the Bible that language development is ongoing, gradual, and uneven in its many layers of grammar, vocabulary, style, and genre. We should be aware of the liquidity of phenomena when working with ancient and mediaeval texts and critically evaluate the simplicity of grammars and dictionaries.

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‘Matth. 3:21 in Old Czech Translations: An Exegetical Scrutiny’

ThLic. Cyril Tomáš Matějec, Ph.D. et Ph.D.,⁶ aimed his attention at an exegetically intricate verse, Matth. 3:21. A frequently used version (ČEP) represents the common understanding: *‘When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”’* (NIV is quoted.) Hard to interpret are (1) unequivocal *‘these nearby’* (lit.), in Gk. texts usually relatives, but not always, (2) the condition of mind *ὅτι ἐξέστη* (ao.), lit. *‘went out / out of’*, idiomatically often + *φρένον*, *‘out of his mind’*, Cz. *‘pominul se’*, needless to add *‘rozumem’*), (3) who claimed that: *ἔλεγον* (*they* = who? Also a general subject in Mk, hence people generally).

Maldonatus, a prominent post-Tridentine exegete (Juan Maldonado, 1533–1583), criticised pious explanations for disregarding the meanings and sense of the text. There were two alternative expositions. (I) Victor of Antiochia, a sixth cent. Greek commentator: *they* = Pharisees. (II) Jacobus Faber Stapulensis, a French Bible translator (J. Lefèvre d’Étaples, ca. 1455–ca. 1536; similarly also Erasmus in 16th cent.): His relatives intended to rescue Jesus from those who *ἔλεγον* that he went crazy (i.e. *‘people said’*).⁷ A third exposition can be added: by Euthymios Zigabénos / Zygadénos, † after 1118: His relatives wanted him not to leave; or: his relatives tried to help him out seeing him on the verge of fainting by strain (*ἐξέστη* = *παρελύθη τὸν τόνον τοῦ σώματος*).

Domestic versions: Lat. *sui* (οἱ παρ’ αὐτοῦ): *‘his disciples’* (*‘učedlníci jeho’* 1365, 1414, 1415, 1417, 1435 and NT 1485), *‘his’* (*‘jeho’* 1435, a 3rd red., 1489) and *‘иже бѣахъ оу него’* (early 11th cent.), which the 1488 Bible (and the slightly earlier NT) misinterpreted to *‘him’* (*‘jej’*). *‘Relatives’* (*‘přibuzní’*) were introduced as late as in 1593/1594 from Greek (then also Rom. Cath. 1677). They all agree in keeping Lat. *dicebant* (*ἔλεγον*) in 3pl, either ipf., or pret. while Lat. *quoniam in furorem versus est* in turn render *‘he had turned angry’* (*‘že se jest v hněv obrátil’* 1365, 1417) and then from 1414 till NT 1485 *furor* → *‘insanity’* (*‘bláznovství’*, 1415: *‘irascibility’*, *‘prchlivost’*) and only since 1488 (which has *‘him’*, *‘jej’*) it is kept *‘that he went out of his mind’* (*‘že by se s smyslem pominul’*, early 11th cent.: *‘яко неистовъ ѣстъ’*).

II

‘Vain efforts of Jaroslav Konopásek to Launch a Kralice Bible Critical Edition Project’

PhDr. Robert Dittmann, Ph.D.,⁸ has documented the efforts of Jaroslav Konopásek (1885–1934), a classical philologist, to launch an undertaking

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⁷ *Bible21*, another frequently used version in contemporary Czech, shares the view with e.g. NRS: *‘...for people were saying, “He has gone out of his mind.”’*

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aimed at compiling and publishing a comparative edition of the text of the *Kralice Bible* (KB). He first (in 1929–1932) tried to initiate a *KB 1613 facsimile edition* effort, then (1931–1932) an 8-volume *critical edition of the 6vol KB* (vol. 7–8: text history). Later he intended to issue *a facsimile of the 6vol KB*. But even if he restricted his plan to *KB NT* only, no funds were available due to the economic crisis at those times. Still, he planned further - to issue the *KB 1582 Psalter*; to establish a *Bible Publishing House*, to publish the *6vol KB notes* as well as a *difference Bible by Karafiát*. Disappointed he died at 51.

‘The 1593 vs 1599 NTs: Two Lexical Approaches of the Jakub Wujek Version’

Prof. dr hab. Tomasz Lisowski⁹ presented the first complete Roman Catholic Bible in Polish, translated by Jakub Wujek (1599, NT 1593). Wujek stated explicitly, in his foreword, he preferred the Latin version as the one more reliable than Greek texts with their additions, alterations and aberrances. These he noted down on the margin. He tried to translate the Latin word for word, also to make his version differ from the Protestant 1563 *Brest Bible*, which admittedly used more elegant language but was, in his opinion, full of errors and heresies. However, he draws equivalents from it as well as four other versions including the Czech *Kralice Bible*. The Jesuit commission made it sound even closer to Latin as a superior source. Prof. Lisowski showed examples of contrasts and correspondences with earlier as well as later versions including Latin and Greek.

‘Headlines, Acronyms and Layout: Formal Framework as a Messenger of Meaning’

Prof. UW, dr hab. Izabela Winiarska-Górska¹⁰ illustrated the role of paratext as a means of helping the *Vulgate* shape and educate the people. Paratext makes a part of the message rather than a mere addition to the text of the Bible.¹¹ The 16th cent. in Poland were times of stabilising and coining new terms. As early as in the 1563 *Brest Bible*, the acronyms were Polish, and the Apocrypha set aside in their division. The Szymon Budny 1574 & 1589 NT’s arrangement ...John, Luke, Acts... made the Luke-Acts unit more visible to the populace.

The importance of paratext is a point relevant for translators and editorial committees of today, too. Whatever joins the text, headlines, emphases, marking or otherwise of direct speech, the selection, format and readability of margin notes, extra articles, the ease of searching as well as the layout and the physical

⁹ Zakład Lingwistyki Antropologicznej, *Instytut Filologii Polskiej UAM*, Poznań.

¹⁰ Zakład Historii Języka Polskiego i Dialektologii, *Instytut Języka Polskiego UW*, Warszawa.

¹¹ See more in Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

quality, also how much the text of the version can speak of itself even if issued without some such additions, and last but not least, how well are the editors available later for reader suggestions, all that adds up to a single simple message that reverberates long after the first edition was out. If the translating and publishing team speaks with one steady voice, it affects how the product is received and understood.

III

‘A Translation of Religious Texts in Moravian Slovak: A Near-Forgotten Print of 1851’

Doc. PhDr. Josef Bartoň, Th.D.,¹² continues in his research of non-mainline versions of Bible texts of the 18th & 19th cent. (The main line is understood the 1715 *St Wenceslas Bible* → the 1804 *Procházka Bible* → the 1851 *Consistorial Bible*.) The 1792 *Pollášek NT*¹³ and the 1790 & 1796 Psalters¹⁴ were preceded by a prayer book translated and compiled by Jozef Hrdina, a retired vicar, who authored quite a few books on various topics and was also a keen promoter of the Czech language. Owing to his local contacts in the grammar school where he taught Czech, he distrusted the established grammars of the day and adopted the regional variety he heard around. He translated selected Psalms (mostly from Latin), the canonical hours and related Scripture portions into the local vernacular in 1851. The composition is nothing special. What catches attention, however, is the language and orthography carefully adapted to be acceptable throughout a large region where many local dialects were spoken (Moravia). It also seems Hrdina did not hesitate to coin equivalents for words he did not consider eligible for some reason.

‘Four Silesian Gospels of Mark: A Comparative Study of Style’

Dr Artur Czesak¹⁵ focused on four recent Bible text translations into four regions of Silesia, Poland, and put them side by side. The Upper Silesian is spoken by about a million people. A grammar of that language is expected soon. Putting vernaculars into literary use is fairly common nowadays, said he. The authors were Zbigniew Kadłubek, who translated Mark 1 from Greek and explained less known terms; Mark Szoltysek, who translated the whole Mark from the Polish 1599 *Wujek Bible* and 1965 *Millenium Bible*, taking also Greek into consideration; Gabriel Tobor, who used the same sources for the whole of Mark and recorded special phonology of the dialect; and Andrzej Cichoń who translated pericopes from the Polish lectionary in 2015.

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¹³ See the review in *AUC Theologica* 10/1, p. 200.

¹⁴ See the review in *AUC Theologica* 11/2, p. 209–210.

¹⁵ Katedra Teorii Komunikacji, *Wydział Polonistyki / Katedra Przekładoznawstwa, Wydział Filologiczny UJ, Kraków*.

IV

‘Bible Glosses in Šwjel’s Diaries: Bible in the Thoughts of a Protestant Preacher’

Priv. doc. dr. habil. Timo Meškank¹⁶ researched the diaries of Bogumił Šwjel (1873–1948), a Lutheran pastor who ministered in two regions of Lusatia in Germany prior to World War I, both in spiritual and secular offices. His notes testify about the Sorbian people and how they related to their own tongue as well as to the German and Slavic peoples. The texts he used in ministering the population were drawn from the 1868 Sorbian Bible.

‘Ancient Emotions in a Modern Language: A Few Examples from the Bible’

Mgr. Helena Panczová, PhD.,¹⁷ an expert on the Septuagint and its modern reception, focused on a couple of examples of expressing emotions. One might think emotions are shared by people regardless of place and time. That is true of basic feelings. However, perceptions of particular emotional conditions and contexts differ in cultures. Hence, expressions of finer feelings do differ, too, in languages. Ancient Greeks, by way of example, failed to recognise and term loneliness or jealousy in the modern sense. On the other hand, we rarely, if ever, use ὀργή, a violent rage. We get angry in a much weaker manner with no murdering intention. Jealousy and envy as φθόνος is rather rivalry, begrudging others what one reserves for oneself. Stoics coined ζηλοτυπία for anxiety not to lose position, again more of rivalry than anything. Romantic jealousy was unknown to Ancient Greeks. This complex emotion related to three people would be perceived as fear or rivalry (e.g. by a wife not to lose her privileges, ζηλοτυπία, as well as grudging against her husband for his pleasures). Ζήλος, in turn, was positive: desiring what the other has can be motivating. Then it comes close to our zeal.

The Septuagint translators then had a problem with rendering the Hebrew קִנְיָא (qin’ā) and the verb קנא. You cannot use φθόνος nor ζηλοτυπία about God. If the condition allowed it, they used ζήλωσις and ζηλω. When, however, a jealous husband in Num. 5:14ff suspects his wife was unfaithful, LXX and Vul. put ζηλοτυπία, *zelotypia*, which in later Lat. and It. *gelosia* via Fr. *jalousie* gave Eng. *jealousy*.

Further examples of jealousy (e.g. Gen. 26:14; Acts 7:9) including the claim God is ‘jealous’ (Nahum 1:2, קִנְיָא קִנְיָא לֵאמֹר, θεὸς ζηλωτῆς καὶ ἐκδικῶν) have demonstrated that trying to keep a consistent equivalent for a term leads to inaccuracies and makes comprehension harder.

The discussion turned to female emotions during labour (NT λύπη, J. Bartoň suggested ‘pain’ rather than ‘sorrow’) and a suggestion by J. Hedánek that Hebr.

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¹⁷ Katedra biblických a historických vied *TF TU*, Bratislava.

רַחֲמִים (abstract pl. from רֶחֶם / רָחַם ‘uterus’) is closer to ‘maternal love’ than its customary equivalent ‘loving kindness’.

‘Language and Style of Polish Attempts to Render Bible Texts in Verse’

Prof. KUL, dr hab. Małgorzata Nowak-Barcińska¹⁸ remarked that there are more rhymed renditions of Bible texts in Polish and Silesian. (In Czech, there is only one known, the 2016 *Poetry of the NT* by Káva-Týnecký.) Then she concentrated on Antoni Gazda (a. k. a. Bogurym Polski). His 2017 verse paraphrased the four Gospels of the 1599 *Wujek Bible* and the 1965 *Millenium Bible*. He paid particular attention to emotions and viewpoints, employed rare words if needed and was often more concise than the canonical texts.

Philologists and exegetes may find such attempts useless but – as the discussion pointed out – it manifests the reception of the text. Included may be local and artificially cultivated jargons (referred to occasionally at these symposia). All such endeavours revive and reverberate texts of the Bible. After all, setting the texts to music, socially well accepted, is just another form of the same phenomenon.

The fifth symposium on the West Slavic Bible upheld and upgraded the already apparent characteristics: Languages and exegeses of the Bible in the wide West Slavic region are intertwined across churches and centuries. Scholarly pursuit demands restrictions on a particular text, language, time, region, or people. Still, not missing mutual links brings new stimuli and outlooks to the research. A discussion where speaking Slovak, Polish, Upper or Lower Sorbian, or Czech turns unimportant, and when different cultural, historical, and literary conditions fuse in the shared mental space, the common heritage and commitment are clearly felt. No sooner had the symposium closed than it brought new impulses and expectations of new results next year.

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