

THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO SLAVIC

Abstract

Old Slavic or Palaeo-Slavic generally refers to the language spoken by the populations that were part of the great family of Slavic peoples. It is possible that, initially, these populations shared a common language which subsequently gave birth to the various more or less mutually similar Slavic languages and dialects. Be that as it may, Old Slavic or Palaeo-Slavic should not be regarded as the ‘mother’ of today’s Slavic languages, but rather as its ‘sister’. During the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who were considered to be ‘the Apostles of the Slavs’, this language was spoken by

the Slavic populations around Saloniki and Byzantium. After the mission of the two Saints, it would be adopted as a literary language by the vast majority of Slavic peoples. As an instrument of culture, Palaeo-Slavic was quite widespread, from Great Moravia (the current territory of Czech Republic and Slovakia) to old Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and old Russia, and subsequently came to be used as a liturgical language even in non-Slavic countries such as the Romanian Provinces and Lithuania. Having become a dead language in time, Old Slavic remains the official liturgical language of the Orthodox Churches of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Czech Republic, and Poland to this day. Given the spread of Old Slavic and its role in promoting Christian teachings, we deemed it important to highlight in the present study how the translation of the Bible was carried out in the Slavic sphere of influence. An overview of main translations and editions will be provided, starting with the first texts translated by Cyril and Methodius, on to the Novgorod Bible (1496) and ending with the synodal translation of the Russian Bible of 1876.

Keywords

Old Slavic, Cyril and Methodius, Glagolitic and Cyrillic alphabet, Bible, translations



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Introduction

The Missionary Work of Saints Cyril and Methodius

The beginnings of the translation of the Bible into Slavic are connected to the missionary activity of brothers Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (825-885). Originating from Saloniki (in northern Greece, by the Aegean Sea), from 862-863 onwards, they conducted important evangelisation work in Great Moravia. As part of his battle against the Frankish expansion carried out through Latin missionaries, Rostislav, the ruler of Great Moravia (a vast empire founded in 846 stretching from Dalmatia to Poland), asked Byzantine Emperor Michael III (842-867) to send him scholars to preach the Christian teachings in the Slavic language, the language of his people. Having been appointed by Michael III for this mission, the two brothers set off for Moravia in 862, where they probably brought some liturgical books translated into the variety of Slavic spoken in the Saloniki area. In the nearly four years they spent in Moravia, they translated the Liturgy, the Gospel, the Apostolos, parts of the Psalter, and other church books.

This period is also marked by numerous conflicts with Latin missionaries. Since the territory on which they conducted their activity was under the jurisdiction of the Pope, Cyril and Methodius were summoned to Rome by Pope Nicholas I (858-867) to answer the charges against them. In the meantime, Pope Nicholas I died and the Pontifical Throne went to Adrian II (867-872). At the end of 867, Cyril and Methodius reached Rome, where they were received by the new Pope, to whom they offered the relics of Saint Clement of Rome. Convinced of the importance of the two brothers' mission, Pope Adrian approved the use of Slavic for rituals and allowed them to continue their activity. Cyril became ill and died in Rome in 869 and was buried in the Church of St. Clement. Methodius was ordained Bishop of Pannonia and Moravia and appointed Papal Legate to the Slavic nations. Nevertheless, upon his return to Moravia in 870, Methodius had to stand alone against the objections raised by the Frankish clergy as to the scope of his jurisdiction and the validity of the Liturgy in Slavic. Having been condemned by the Frankish bishops at the Council of Regensburg, Methodius was deposed and put in jail. Three years later, Pope John VIII (872-882) released him and reinstated him as Archbishop of Moravia, on the condition that he should stop performing religious services in Slavic, but only use that language to preach. In 880, through the *Industriae tuae* bull addressed to Prince Svätopluk of Moravia (871-894), the same Pope approved the use of Slavic in the Liturgy and the reading of the texts

translated from the New and Old Testament, provided that the Gospel should be read first in Latin and then in Slavic. Methodius died in 885 and the Slavic Liturgy was condemned by Pope Stephen V (885-891).

Soon after Methodius' death, following confrontations with Latin missionaries supported by Rome, his disciples were forced to withdraw into Macedonia and Bulgaria, where they were received by Knyaz Boris-Mihail (852-888). In the immediately subsequent period, they continued to translate religious books from Greek into Slavic and to make copies of already completed translations.

According to biographic sources, in the Cyril-Methodius era (863-885), almost all of the books of the Bible, except for the Maccabees, were translated from Greek to Palaeo-Slavic. Most specialists today prefer to attribute to them only the translations of the main biblical texts used in liturgical services: the Gospel, the Apostolos, and the Psalter.

The Glagolitic and the Cyrillic Alphabet

The first Slavic texts translated by Cyril and Methodius and their disciples starting in the second half of the 9th century have not been preserved in their original version, but only as subsequent copies. The oldest Slavic manuscripts, dating from the late 10th century and especially from the 11th century, are written in two alphabets: the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic.

The Glagolitic alphabet was introduced into Great Moravia by Cyril and Methodius to be able to correctly render the sounds of the language spoken by the local population. Its name, however, is fairly recent and stems from the term *glagoljati*, which in Serbo-Croatian means 'to speak' or 'to utter' (in Slavic). In Croatia, Catholic priests who performed the Liturgy in Old Slavic were called '*glagoljaši*'. The oldest biblical manuscripts in the Glagolitic alphabet, from the late 10th century and especially from the 11th century, are the Tetraevangelion of Zograph, the Tetraevangelion of St. Mary Monastery, the Assemani Evangeliary, the Sinai Psalter.

The name of the second alphabet is related to the name of St. Cyril. Contrary to what one may think, the Cyrillic alphabet is not his invention, but an adaptation of the Glagolitic alphabet. It is attributed to Bishop Clement of Ohrid (840-916), a disciple of Saints Cyril and Methodius who elaborated a much simpler alphabet than the original Glagolitic one. The oldest Cyrillic biblical manuscripts, dating from the 11th century,

are the Sava Evangeliary, the Apostolos of Enina, the Evangeliary of Reims, and the Evangeliary of Ostromir.

The Western Slavs remained faithful to the Glagolitic alphabet and the Slavic Liturgy, despite the unfavourable decisions of the local councils of Split of 925 and 1061. To preserve liturgical books in the Glagolitic alphabet and keep performing services in the language of the people, Croatian priests did not hesitate to attribute this alphabet to Blessed Jerome of Stridon. Thus, in 1248, Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) authorised the Liturgy in Slavic and the use of the Glagolitic alphabet, his rationale being that ‘it has existed since the age of Jerome’. From the 13th century onwards, the Eastern Slavs abandoned the Glagolitic alphabet in favour of the Cyrillic one. Simplified in 1708 by Tzar Peter the Great (1772-1725), it lies at the origin of the current Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Macedonian alphabet.

There are several similarities between the two alphabets which have led researchers to hypothesise that they might have kindred origins: the Glagolitic alphabet comes from the Greek minuscule alphabet, to which several Oriental signs were added, while the Cyrillic alphabet is modelled after the Greek uncial alphabet, considered much nobler and thus fitting for the writing of liturgical texts (De Proyart 1989, 383-422).

The Bible of Metropolitan Gennadius of Novgorod (1499)

The books of the Scriptures in Palaeo-Slavic were first translated and compiled into a single volume in the late 15th century in the form of the Novgorod Bible (1499). Before that, translations of all the books probably existed in Russia, but they disappeared after the Tartar invasion of the 13th century. The oldest biblical manuscripts preserved from the pre-Mongolian era originate from northwestern Russia and contain the Gospels: the Mstislav Evangeliary (1117), the Galician (Galich) Evangeliary (1144), the Dobrilov Evangeliary (1164).

The reason behind the appearance of the first complete manuscript of the Slavic Bible is the Church’s battle against the Novgorod-Moscow movement of the Judaisers. Having emerged at the beginning of 1470 in Novgorod, it only took a decade for this sect to become very widespread among Moscow dignitaries and clerics. In addition to heretical teachings — contesting the dogma of the Holy Trinity, the cult of the Mother of God, the veneration of saints and icons, refusing to acknowledge the hierarchy, practising astrology and magic — Judaisers expressed reservations as to the translation of the biblical texts. Under such circumstances, priest Ivan Cherny († 1490) of Moscow

performed corrections on a late 14th – early 15th – century codex containing the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth and Esther, using other Slavic manuscripts as a reference. Cherny then used the codex to correct the biblical books of the Russian Chronicle manuscript of the Holy Trinity Lavra of Moscow.

It is during the same period that a revision of the translation of the Pentateuch was performed based on the Hebrew text (MT). The revised text contained marginal glosses and was divided into 52 *parašôth* (sections or liturgical pericopes to be read out on Saturdays at the synagogue), one for each of the 52 weeks of the liturgical year: 12 for Genesis, 10 for Exodus (MT contains 11), 10 for Leviticus, 10 for Numbers (MT contains 11), 10 for Deuteronomy. The revision is attributed to Theodor, a Jew from Ruthenia converted to Christianity by Metropolitan Zosimus of Moscow (1448-1461). The text of the revised Pentateuch had no direct influence on the Bible of 1499, as the Hebrew glosses are only found in the Bibles of 1581 and 1663. However, the translators of the Novgorod Bible were familiar with the said revision: the fourth preface contains a list of the 52 *parašôth*, which are then present in the text of the Pentateuch.

In 1484, when Gennadius was chosen Metropolitan of Novgorod (1484-1504), he didn't find all the books of the Bible in the Slavic manuscripts available to him. In his battle against the Judaisers, he decided to put together the existing texts and translate the missing ones to place at the disposal of the clergy a complete codex of the Bible. This project would take over seven years and be carried out by a group of scholars led by Archdeacon Gerasimov Popovka. Among the translators that stood out were Dmitry Gerasimov and Vlas Ignatov, together with Veniamin, a Dominican monk of Croatian or Czech origin – ‘a Slav by birth and a Latin by faith’ (Florovsky 2001, 20) – who arrived in Novgorod in 1490.

The first stage of the project consisted in gathering all of the biblical manuscripts available. The Slavic text was compared to the Latin Vulgate, and then the obscure phrases or archaic expressions were modified. In the case of partial or total lacunae, the Slavic text was filled in or translated integrally from the Vulgate version. Furthermore, the order of the books and their division into chapters, as well as the number of ‘deuterocanonical’ books of the Old Testament mirrored those of the Vulgate version.

The main Latin edition employed by translators was the Vulgate printed in four volumes by Anton Koberger in Nürnberg in 1487. Another edition is the one published by Nicolaus Kesler in Basel in 1487 or its re-edited version printed in Basel in 1491. Aside from the Latin editions, there were two German Bibles printed by Heinrich

Quentel in Köln/Cologne in 1478, from which the titles of the pericopes were borrowed. Dmitry Gerasimov also used the German text as a source when translating the third preface, which contained the list of the 75 books of the Bible, followed by an explanation regarding the division of the text into pericopes. Some words and phrases of Czech origin indicate that the translators had access either to the princeps edition of the Czech translation of the Vulgate version, published in Prague in 1488 or to the second edition, issued in Kuttenberg in 1489.

The final text of Gennadius' Bible was accompanied by commentaries from the work of Franciscan theologian Nicholas of Lyra, *Postilla litteralis et moralis in Vetus et Novum Testamentum*, first published in Nürnberg in 1493. The commentaries also included excerpts from *Additiones ad Postillam magistri Nicolai de Lyra* by Bishop Paul of Sancta Maria, from *Defensorium Postillae Nicolai de Lyra contra Paulum Burgensem* by Matthias Doering and from *Postillae super prologos S. Hieronymi* by William Brito. Some of the prophetic books of the Old Testament (Isaiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah) include brief introductions taken from the commentaries of Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus.

Even though it is difficult to determine the origin, number and contents of the Slavic manuscripts that circulated in Russia before the 16th century and that lay at the foundation of the 1499 Bible, specialists do propose the following classification:

For the New Testament, one can acknowledge at least four sources:

- translations by Saints Cyril and Methodius from the 9th century, containing parts of the Gospels, the Apostolos, and the Apocalypse, which were later added to by anonymous translators;
- translations carried out in Russia from the 12th to the 13th century;
- the translation of the New Testament by Alexius, Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus (1354-1378), around the year 1355;
- an edition of the Moscow Gospel from the 15th century, based on revised Slavic texts originating from Bulgaria and Serbia.

For the Old Testament, there are also four sources to be taken into consideration: old manuscripts containing translations from the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius or their disciples: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-4 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Book of Sirach, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi;

- prophetic books translated in Bulgaria during the rule of Tzar Simeon

(893-927) and mostly passed down through liturgical books or patristic commentaries: Isaiah, parts of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the 12 Minor Prophets;

- two books translated in Russia: Esther, translated between the 11th and the 13th century from a Hebrew source or from a Greek text close to the Hebrew one, the Song of Songs, which appeared in the 12th century as an abridged version accompanied by patristic commentaries;

- texts and books translated from the Vulgate version: the lacunae in Jeremiah (1,9-10; 1,18-2,1; 2,13-25,14; 46,1-52,3) and Esther (passages specific to the Greek text of the Septuagint and absent from the Masoretic Text, included in the Vulgate version in chapters 10,4-16,24), 1-2 Paralipomena (1-2 Chronicles), Ezra, Nehemiah (2 Ezra), 3 Ezra, 4 Ezra, Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, 1-2 Maccabees.

The absence of the 3rd Book of the Maccabees from the Old Testament is explained by the fact that the first Latin translation of the Greek text appeared in the Vulgate version printed in Lyon in 1532, while the inclusion of the 4th Book of Ezra is explained by its presence in the Vulgate editions. All the translations of the Vulgate version are attributed by specialists to the Dominican monk Veniamin.

The first complete codex of the Slavic Bible (*Gennadiievskaiia Biblia*) contained 986 pages and 50 copies were made after it. In the second half of the 16th century, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and parts of the Psalter were often printed in Lvov and Vilnius. In 1564, Ivan Fedorov printed an Apostolos in Moscow, the first book ever printed in Russia, in which he filled in the lacunae in the Slavic text with verses from the Latin, German and Czech Bibles.

The Psalms with Commentaries of Maximus the Greek (1521)

A mere decade after the appearance of Gennadius's Bible, many mistakes began slipping into biblical manuscripts. In the early 16th century, the first attempt to revise the biblical text was made, with a focus on liturgical books. At the request of Knyaz Vasili III (1479-1533), in 1518-1519, Moscow received Maximus the Greek, who would be tasked with correcting the liturgical books and harmonizing the Rite by the Greek manuscripts. A monk from Vatopedi Monastery of Mount Athos, Maximus (by his secular name Mikhail Trivolis), was a great Greek scholar who had studied philosophy and philology in Italy for ten years.

In 1521, after a year and a half of work, Maximus, who was not familiar with the Slavic language, aided by Dmitrij Gerasimov and Vlas Ignatov, completed a new translation of the Psalms, in which the difficult passages were accompanied by commentaries. Having translated several other biblical texts as well (Esther, 4 Maccabees) and patristic commentaries (the Commentaries of Saint John Chrysostom), Maximus expressed his desire to return to Mount Athos. Knyaz Vasili III detained him and asked him to continue revising liturgical books. Maximus' corrections sparked controversy among the Russian hierarchs and, in 1525, he was deemed a heretic by the Moscow council. For 30 years, Maximus was imprisoned in various monasteries until he died in 1556. In 1565, Ivan Fedorov published a new, stylistically and lexically revised edition of Maximus the Greek's Psalms with commentaries.

The Bible of Ostrog (1581)

In the second half of the 16th century, following the Union of Lublin (1569), Slavic printing and cultural centres appeared in Lithuania-Poland as a manifestation of the Ruthenian Orthodox population's attempt to rival the education provided by Jesuit colleges. This cultural movement enjoyed not only the support of Ruthenian merchants and tradesmen but also that of the nobility. An important role was played here by Prince Konstanty Ostrogski (1526-1608), a member of an illustrious Ruthenian family. In 1577, Ostrogski turned his town, Ostrog (Ostroh), into a veritable centre for Oriental Slavic education and culture under the name of the Ostrog Academy. He also founded a publishing house, which would issue several works in Slavic, among which the Ostrog Bible, the first complete printed edition of the Slavic Bible.

Among the Greek and Slavic 'lovers of wisdom' (Florovsky 2001, 34) who were active in Ostrog there were Herasym Smotrytsky, the first rector of the Academy and the main collaborator in the preparation of the Bible, Ivan Fedorov, the well-known Russian typographer, priest Vasyl Surazsky, author of *On a United Faith*, published in Ostrog in 1583, priest Damian Nalyvaiko, head of the parish of the Church of St. Nicholas of Ostrog, and Jan Latos, a famous mathematician and astronomer.

The foremost accomplishment of the Ostrog Academy was the publishing of the Bible in 1581. The endeavour took three or four years of work, which involved Ostrog scholars using several manuscripts, editions and translations of the biblical text. As early as 1570, Prince Konstanty began sourcing manuscripts of the best Slavic translations of the Scriptures from various corners of Russia. Unfortunately, as he confessed in the

first preface to the Bible, 'of all the Old Testament manuscripts, none was found to be perfect'. In 1571 or 1573, he obtained from Tzar Ivan the Terrible (1530-1584) a copy of Gennadius's Bible. Aside from Gennadius's Bible, Ostrogski brought the best copies of the Septuagint available in Greek or Slavic from Bohemia, the Balkans, Constantinople, and the 'Latin countries' (Desnitsky 2005: 245-52). He also placed at the disposal of the translators the Czech Catholic Bible translated from the Vulgate version and re-edited by Jiří Melantrich in 1570, the Polish Leopoldian Bible, translated by Catholics from the Vulgate version and published in Krakow in 1561, Radziwill's Polish Bible, translated by Protestants from the Masoretic Text and published in Brest-Litovsk in 1563 (Alexeev 2004, 13-30). For the Greek text, the translators used the Aldine edition of the Septuagint, published by Aldo Manuzio in Venice in 1518, and the Poliglota Complutense Bible completed by Cardinal Ximénez in Alcalá in 1514-1517.

According to the information on the title page, the Ostrog edition aimed to be a Septuagint-based revised version of Metropolitan Gennadius's Bible. In reality, it is a compilation of texts revised by the Septuagint and the Vulgate version and it contains a series of important modifications:

- books 1-2 Paralipomena, Ezra, Nehemiah (2 Ezra), the Wisdom of Solomon, 1-2 Maccabees were confronted with the Septuagint text and corrections were made wherever necessary;
- the Song of Songs was retranslated in full from Greek;
- the text of the Book of Esther was replaced with Maximus the Greek translation of the Septuagint text;
- book 3 Maccabees was translated and included now for the first time in the Slavic Bible;
- the Pentateuch contains rectifications and glosses borrowed from the Slavic manuscript revised according to the Masoretic Text in the 15th century;
- the books of Tobit, Judith, 3-4 Ezra, and parts of Jeremiah (1,9-10; 1,18-2,1; 2,13-25,14; 46,1-52,3) were revised according to the Vulgate version;
- the Prayer of Manasseh was taken by Fedorov from his Book of Hours and added at the end of 2 Paralipomena, mirroring the order in the Vulgate version;
- the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles reproduce the text and order of the books in the Apostolos published by Fedorov in Moscow in 1564 and Lvov in 1574;

- the text is accompanied by various notes and explanatory passages, such as the introductions to the Gospels written by St. Theophylact of Bulgaria, and, at the end of the book, there is a list of the Gospel pericopes for the Sundays and feasts throughout the year.

In 1580, Fedorov published *The New Testament and the Psalms* in a small format and, in August 1581, he printed 1,000 or 1,200 copies of the complete Bible. The 76 scriptural books are divided into chapters and laid out in two columns of 50 rows each. The same Bible was reprinted in Ostrog in 1595. In 1614, only the Gospels were published in Moscow and, in 1623 and 1644, the New Testament was in Vilnius and Lvov, respectively.

The Moscow Bible (1663)

This Bible appeared in the context of Russia's attempt to expand its influence on the Ukrainian Orthodox population, especially after the Cossack uprising of 1648, when Ukraine enjoyed relative political autonomy. However, in the late 17th century, after the division of the Polish-Lithuanian state among its more powerful neighbours, the territory of Ukraine would be included in the Russian Empire. Following the various corrections made to the Slavic texts, significant differences emerged between Ukrainian and Russian liturgical books. Since books printed in Poland-Lithuania were widely used in Russia, in 1628, the Synod of the Russian Church decreed that they should be replaced with the Moscow editions. The latter had been revised according to a Greek text erroneously considered to be older or closer to the original than the Slavic one. Russian scholars noted that the text of the Ostrog Bible used in Ukraine was also much more similar to the Greek text of the Septuagint than that of Gennadius's Bible. It was therefore necessary to carry out new translations of the Bible based on the Septuagint text, but Moscow lacked the people qualified to do it.

In 1648, Tzar Aleksey Mikhaylovich (1645-1676) invited to Moscow two erudite monks and professors at the College of Kiev, namely Epiphanius Slavinetsky and Arsenius Sukhanovsky, together with several Kiev typographers, to prepare the publishing of a new Slavic Bible. Initially, the team working on this project set out to revise the Ostrog Bible but soon realised that the translation needed to be redone entirely. Unfortunately, this was not possible. Epiphanius Slavinetsky was co-opted by Patriarch Nikon Minov (1652-1658) and became his main assistant in the reform regarding the revision and publication of the liturgical books, which led to the schism of the Old Believers from the

Russian Church. As part of this reform, the Apostolos appeared in 1653, the Evangeliary in 1657, followed by the Book of Hours and the Psalter in 1658.

1663 marked the publishing in Moscow of the first edition of the Slavic Bible under the blessing of the Synod of the Russian Church. Aside from certain minor changes (the revision of the Psalms based on the Greek text; the prefacing of the Psalms by St. Athanasius of Alexandria's *Letter to Marcellinus* translated by Epiphanius Slavnetsky; *comma ioaneum* translated in 1 John 5,7-8; the marking of parallel passages; the orthographic correction of the text; the replacement of archaic, unclear words), the Bible of 1663 is a re-edited version of the Ostrog Bible. Printed in 2,412 copies, this edition exhibits high-quality graphics.

In 1674, with the approval of the Synod, Tzar Aleksey asked Slavnetsky to retranslate the entire Bible from the original Greek text of the Septuagint published in Frankfurt in 1597, from Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible published in London in 1654-1657, and from the Sixtine Septuagint edition of 1587. Slavnetsky started the work together with six collaborators and, by the time of his death in 1675, only managed to finish the New Testament.

The Moscow Bible, called *Pervopečatnaja* (the first to be printed) in Slavic, would become dominant not only in the Russian Orthodox Church. Due to it preceding the council of 1666, which condemned the opponents of Patriarch Nikon's reform, the 1663 edition remains to this day the only Bible acknowledged by Old Believers (*raskolniki*).

The Age of Peter the Great (1672-1725)

The reign of Peter the Great marked an important time for both the history and culture of Russia, as well as in the life of the Orthodox Church. Within the new cultural context, the translation of the Bible into the language of the people was seen by Peter the Great as a challenge of his age.

In 1712, Peter the Great issued a decree ordering the creation of a commission tasked with the complete revision of the 1663 Bible based on the text of the Septuagint. According to the decree, the commission of translators, editors, and typographers included hieromonk Sophronios Leichoudes, Archimandrite Theophylact Lopatinsky, Theodore Polikarpov, Nikolai Semenov, monks Theologian and Joseph. The project enjoyed the support of the hierarchs and clergy, who still remembered the most recent attempt to revise the Bible, which ended in the schism of 1666. However, the commission began its translation work in 1713 and, three years later, the six members would be joined by Ioannikios Leichoudes and

Athanasius Kondoide. Revising the Bible in full took ten years and, in 1723, the final manuscript was submitted to the Synod of the Russian Church for approval.

In 1724, the Tzar ordered that the changes made to the 1663 Bible should be checked and then introduced into the text and, to avoid a new schism, he asked that the passages that were to be replaced should still be kept as marginal glosses. Moreover, the final text was to be submitted for his approval. Via another decree issued in the same year, Peter ordered that the text of the Psalms should be kept unchanged and that any modifications should be included as marginal glosses. The members of the Synod were then presented with various samples of the printed text, which were to be sent to the Tzar to choose from. Unfortunately, after Peter the Great died in 1725, the endeavour to publish the Bible was abandoned. It was only at the end of 1725 that Empress Catherine I (1725-1727) chose the print model and ordered Lopatinsky and Kondoide to check the entire work again. Catherine's death in 1727 caused the project to be abandoned once more.

According to the information in the manuscript preserved in the Synod library in Moscow, the first book to be translated was that of Numbers, in 1714, and the last was Judith, in 1720, followed by the proofreading of the entire translation by the members of the commission. As for the text of the Septuagint, the translators used the London *Polyglot Bible* (1655-1657), edited by Brian Walton (which included, for the first time, versions from the *Codex Alexandrinus*), the Aldine edition of the Septuagint (1518) published by Aldo Manuzio in Venice, the Sixtine Septuagint edition (1587), as well as the Latin translation of the Sixtine Septuagint (1588), published by Flaminio Nobili in Rome. The text of the Slavic translation is accompanied by patristic quotations, including some from Blessed Augustine and Saint Ambrose; in addition, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram* by Cornelius a Lapido, *Postilla litteralis et moralis in Vetus et Novum Testamentum* by Nicholas of Lyra and *Synopsis criticorum aliorumque sacrae Scripturae interpretum* by Matthew Poole were referred to.

It is also worth mentioning that, in 1716, in an attempt to modernise the state, Peter the Great ordered the preparation of a Dutch-Russian bilingual edition of the New Testament, which was intended to serve as an aid for his subjects in learning the Dutch language. The Dutch text of the States-General Bible, first published in Leiden in 1637, was printed in the Hague in 1717 in two volumes, on the left column. Then, in 1718-1719 in Sankt Petersburg, the Slavic text of the 1663 edition was printed on the right

column. Pleased with the result, Peter the Great also commissioned the Old Testament to be printed similarly. When the four Dutch volumes, published in Amsterdam in 1721, reached Sankt Petersburg in 1723, it was discovered that the text translated from Hebrew was dissimilar to the Slavic one in many instances. In 1724, Tzar Peter decided that the problem should be solved by adding glosses indicating the differences between the two versions. The Tzar's death in 1725 prevented the completion of the project.

However, it is worth noting that, throughout this period, certain texts from the 1663 Bible were printed, either with or without commentaries: the Gospels commented on by Theophylact (Moscow, 1698), the Psalter (Moscow, 1698), the New Testament (Moscow, 1702), the New Testament (Kiev, 1703), the Gospels (Moscow, 1711), the New Testament with commentaries (Chernigov, 1717), the Psalter (Moscow, 1717). In addition, two non-liturgical editions of the Psalms were published: poet Simeon Polotsky wrote an in-verse translation into Slavic in 1680 and, in 1683, Avraam Firsov translated into Russian Calvin's Psalter from the Brest-Litovsk Bible (1563). The latter was the first translation of a biblical text into the language of the people ever made in Russia. Due to the negative reactions that ensued, Patriarch Joachim Savyolov (1674-1690) would ban it for believers (Krause 1958: 11-23).

The Elizabethan Bible (1750-51)

In 1735, the Synod of the Russian Church resumed the idea of publishing a new Bible and decided to carry it out in the capital of the Empire, Sankt Petersburg, at the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, under the direct supervision of Archbishop Theophan Prokopovich. To avoid wasting time checking and approving a new complete version, they opted to reprint the 1663 Bible and use marginal glosses to indicate the places where the old translation was significantly different from the new one. After the death of Theophan Prokopovich in 1736, Archimandrite Stefan Kalinovsky of Alexander Nevsky Monastery was appointed head of the commission for the revising and printing of the new Bible. In 1738, the commission ceased its activity. Stefan Kalinovsky disagreed with the use of the Vulgate version as a reference when revising certain books (Tobit, Judith, 3 Ezra). Furthermore, the addition of glosses containing reading versions and corrections in between lines and around the edges made the text illegible or undecipherable. Hoping to find a solution, Kalinovsky submitted several reports to the Synod but received no reply. In 1739, he has ordained Bishop of Pskov and the revision and printing of the Bible were abandoned.

In 1741, the members of the Synod decided that the 1663 Bible should be revised based on the Septuagint text as published in the London Polyglot Bible (1655-1657). To ensure a smooth revision process, it was decided that the Bible should be printed at the Moscow Academy. In 1743, Archimandrite Thaddeus Kokuilovich and Kirill Florinsky, rector of the Moscow Academy, completed the revision of the text and submitted it to the Synod for verification and approval. The revisors' report shows that the text of the Old Testament was now closer to the one of the *Codex Alexandrinus* published in the London Polyglot Bible. Nevertheless, the revisors meticulously followed the text of the Polyglot version. They also took into account the *Poliglota Complutense* (1514-1517) and the Sixtine Septuagint edition (1587) whenever they contained versions consistent with the Slavic text, indicating, where necessary, the differences from the *Codex Alexandrinus*. For the translation of the books of Judith, Tobit, and 3 Ezra, the Septuagint was used, while, for 4 Ezra, the Vulgate version was employed; however, due to their frequent reading in church, the Psalms and the New Testament were not revised.

Seeing how slowly the Synod worked at verifying and approving the new Bible, Empress Elizabeth (1741-1761) felt compelled to intervene. She issued a decree in February 1744 explaining how necessary the Bible was, both in church and among the people, and ordering that 'the members of the Synod should come together twice a day during Great Lent, except for Sundays and feast days, to revise the scriptural text given having it printed before Easter'. A commission was formed immediately, consisting of Archbishop Ambrose Yushkevich of Novgorod, Archbishop Joseph Volchansky of Moscow, Bishop Platon Malinovsky of Sarai, and archimandrites Simion Todorsky, Arsenius Mogiliyansky and Hilarion Grigorovich. In March 1744, the commission reported to the Empress that it was impossible to complete the revision of the 1663 Bible based exclusively on the Septuagint, as the fragments previously translated from the Vulgate version were not found in the Greek text. Under such circumstances, the Synod established the following principle: if the changes proposed were by the Greek text, they would be adopted and, if not, they would be submitted to the Synod for approval.

In 1745, under increasing pressure from the Empress, the Synod advised the revisors to limit themselves to those passages that exhibited blatant contradictions between the new text and the 1663 Bible or that seemed to challenge Orthodox teachings. Furthermore, to facilitate communication with the Synod, in 1746, the revision commission was relocated to Sankt Petersburg.

In 1747, the final re-examination of the text was entrusted to a commission formed by hieromonks Jacob Blonitsky, professor at the Moscow Academy, and Varlaam Lyashkevsky and Gideon Slominsky, professors at the Kiev Academy. In 1748, Blonitsky withdrew from the commission, so Lyashkevsky and Slominsky continued the revision on their own until September 1750. Aside from the Polyglot Bible, they used the versions of the Septuagint published by Lambertus Bos (Franeker, 1709) and by Christian Reineccius (Leipzig, 1730), the *Codex Alexandrinus* edited by Ernst Grabe (Oxford, 1707-1720) and reprinted by Johann Jakob Breitinger (Zürich, 1730-1732).

In December 1751, the first 600 copies of the new Bible were printed in Sankt Petersburg, followed by another 1,200 in 1752. Known as the Elizabethan Bible (*Elizavetinskaia Bibliia*), after the Russian Empress, the text was printed again in 1756, 1757, 1759, and 1872.

The 1751 Bible exhibits certain significant changes as compared to 1663 one:

- the Epistle of Jeremiah, previously included at the end of the Book of Baruch (chapter 6), following the example of the Vulgate version, now stands separately, after the Lamentations of Jeremiah;
- 4 Ezra no longer comes after 3 Ezra, but is placed at the end of the Old Testament, after 3 Maccabees;
- the end of verse ten of the Prayer of Manasseh ('I have set up abominations and have multiplied offences') has been translated into Slavic for the first time;
- the Psalms and the New Testament have been corrected orthographically and grammatically, any text variants being specified in glosses;
- the division of the text into chapters has been amended and the numbering of verses has been introduced;
- in the introduction there is a Slavic translation of the 'Synopsis of the Holy Scriptures' attributed to St. Athanasius of Alexandria, a list of the pericopes ordained for fixed feasts, moveable feasts, and various services, an alphabetical catalogue of proper names and untranslated words in the text, accompanied by explanations of their meaning.

The Elizabethan Bible, also called the Synodal Bible, having been published under the blessing of the Synod of the Russian Church, is to this day the official canonical and liturgical text of the Holy Scriptures in the Russian Orthodox Church. It is also the official liturgical text employed by the Orthodox Churches of Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, the Czech Republic, and Poland (Bryner 1974: 318-31).

Instead of a Conclusion. The Synodal Translation of the Bible (1876)

In 1852, the Synod of the Russian Church decided to have the Bible translated into Russian. To that purpose, it appointed a commission formed by priests A.V. Gorsky and K.I. Nevostruyev, assisted by Philaret Drozdov, the Metropolitan of Moscow. The Gospels were published in 1860, followed by the entire New Testament in 1862, and by the complete Bible in 1876. This is not an adaptation of the Slavic text in the 1751 Bible, but a scientific translation based on the critical editions available at the time, namely the Masoretic Text for the canonical books of the Old Testament, the Septuagint for the deuterocanonical books, the Vulgate version for 4 Ezra, *Textus Receptus* for the New Testament. The 1876 Bible, called *Sinodal'nyi perevod* (the Synodal Translation), received the Synod's blessing for academic usage and the individual use of believers, but not for liturgical usage. All of the Synodal editions that followed, in 1882, 1907, 1917... to this day are published based on this version, with various revisions. The Synodal Translation of the Russian Bible of 1876 would be translated into Bulgarian in 1901 (Cann 1993: 5-23).

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