

RELIGION AND CULTURALLY STIPULATED LANGUAGE MEANS

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Abstract. The article deals with the correlation of religion, culture and their language expressions on the material of English biblical phrases. The topicality of the subject under discussion is stipulated by the fact that religion, culture and national mentality have been stirring philosophers and historians from time immemorial. The authors conclude that religious attitude, ritual practice, moral, church establishments deeply penetrate into people's mode of life as well as language use, determine a great number of things in them and constitute an essential part of cultural peculiarities of a certain nation.

Keywords: religion, culture, national mentality, church establishments, confessional faith, biblical phrases, ethnolanguage, linguistics, internal (external) culture communication.

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Introduction

In correlations of language, culture and religion one observes their logic, paradoxes and dramatism. The matter is, that all the bases of human culture have been deeply rooted in religion and language. Therefore language and religion refer to those factors, which determine national mentality, thus influencing the formation of both individually unique and some common traits with different cultures.

The Definition of Religion

Religion as a certain dogma and worship practice joins their followers in church - a social institution, uniting its believers in faith of supernatural forces. It is one of the most important spheres of social reality. For a great number of centuries religious ideas, church institutions and devout practice dominated and radically influenced all other manifestations of social consciousness, public organizations and culture. Therefore the influence of religion on culture and national mentality of people is exceptionally deep and versatile. Religious attitude, ritual practice, pious moral and church establishments deeply penetrate into people's mode of life and language use, determine a lot of things in them and constitute an essential part of cultural peculiarities of a certain nation. With this, by interacting with culture of a particular nation world religions acquire certain characteristic features in different countries. It is reflected in church lexis; often not translated as it reflects confessional faith originality and peculiarity of the people under consideration, e. g.: *church* — *Protestant church* — *Polish Roman-Catholic Church* — *synagogue* — *mosque*; *priest* — *parson* — *pastor* — *Roman* — *Catholic priest (in Poland)* — *rabbi* — *mullah* — *lama*; *liturgy* — *mass* — *imsha*; *Father-Superior (a prior of an orthodox monastery)* — *abbot (a prior of a Roman-Catholic abbey)*.

The Definition of Culture

The many-sidedness of the notion of culture with a high level of abstraction presents significant difficulties for its definition, exceeding the figure of 100. Despite the varieties of interpreting this notion, one may pick out main points, which bring together the majority of the definitions used.

Firstly, nowadays culture is more often considered as a global phenomenon, including all the sides of human society existence. Secondly, both material and spiritual elements are singled out in culture. Culture as a social phenomenon is the totality of material and spiritual values, having been accumulated by a certain community of people.

As an extremely sophisticated notion culture may be defined only in its most basic traits. E. g., in E. V. Sokolov's opinion, culture is „one of the most general philosophical and sociological notions covering a great number of phenomena and being at a very high level of abstraction” (*Sokolov, 1972: 32*). This multitude of material and spiritual elements includes: geography of a certain region, political and economic organization of society, the system of education, health care, social security, military forces, public organizations, sport, mode of life, literature and arts, religion, traditions, etc. The present state of culture is an integral part of the past and is significantly influenced by it. Therefore the study of its correlative traits with other forms of human activities seems to be of significant value for both science and scholarship.

The Interrelation of Religion and Culture

There are three points of view on the interrelation of religion and culture. The first of them is based on the assertion that religion is the basis and point of departure in culture, that is, there may not be culture without religion. This point of view is shared by such outstanding Russian thinkers as V. S. Solovyov, P. A. Florensky, N. A. Berdyayev, S. N. Bulgakov. In their publications they affirm the view about the religious origin of culture, its „germination” from worship, theurgical and mysterious character of its symbolism. They also consider, that the unjustified delimitation of culture and religion leads to growing poor the moral contents of culture, and its decadence.

The second point of view consists in the fact that religion and culture represent different things in principle. This position is taken by founding fathers of historical and dialectical materialism – K. Marx and F. Engels (*Marx, Engels, 1976*) and also their followers. They consider that these two forms of social consciousness are antagonistic in relation to each other, and that in the process of history culture will force out religion as a form of social being.

In modern scholarly dispute the most popular is the third point of view consisting in the assertion that religion is one of the inalienable structural components of culture, the role of which is historically changeable. Religion in the course of history often executes the function of forming normative boundaries, providing the opportunity of its existence, reproduction and development. Changes in culture entail alterations in religion. However, at this the notion of culture is much more many-sided and volumetric, than the notion of religion. This point of view is shared by such modern researchers in this field of knowledge as L. N. Mitrokhin, A. K. Sukhotin, N. B. Mechkovskaya. In modern studies three basis components are usually singled out in the extent of the notion of culture: science, arts and religion, executing accordingly cognitive, aesthetic and moral functions as well as being the incarnation in the following three fundamental categories: TRUTH, BEAUTY and GOOD. It goes without saying that these three constituents of culture are not a mechanical combination but a single whole system.

In the epoch of the most ancient states and Middle Ages ethnolanguage and to some degree cultural distinctions among people and countries were overshadowed by religion.

Nowadays among the peoples of Europe, America, South and Eastern Asia, in Africa to the South of Sahara "nationality" is realized as a more weighty, more informative measuring than belonging to a certain confession of faith. The exception is the Islam World: religion in it is realized by the Moslems as the basic determinant feature of man or the whole nation.

In contemporary world the boundaries of religions as a whole correspond to historically established territories and do not coincide with the frontiers of languages, nations and states. Modern generations inherited mental and cultural traditions of their religion, which largely determine the originality of mentality, world perception and behaviour of a certain nation. However, these traditions were and are mainly of a superethnic character. One-nation religions (such as Judaism of Jews, Sintoism of the Japanese or the Armenian - Gregorian Church) is a very rare phenomenon. The peculiarities of national culture, conditioned by its religion, turn out to be largely common of a certain cultural and religious world (the World of Buddhism, the World of Islam, the Christian World). As to the originality of a concrete nation, it is created by combination of a number of factors, but the main of them is uniqueness of a historical way of every nation, including the history of its religious life.

Proceeding from the above mentioned facts, we have every reason to conclude, that religion is of a *supercultural* character. Islam, e.g., exerts an immediate influence on a lot of cultures, basically of the Afro-Asian World, Christianity – mainly on the European and American continents. The peculiarity of Christianity is its dissidence in three basic branches: Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Protestantism, which, in their turn, also have some "branches" with their own maps of denominations". One of such branches is, e.g., Russian Orthodoxy.

Language and Cultural Orientation

For a great number of years linguists have been attempting to settle the question, how national culture influences language, and vice versa, how language influences national culture. Renowned scholars of the 19th century realized language as a spiritual force, forming national culture. The belief in the determinant influence of language on the spiritual life of people underlay language philosophy by William von Humboldt (1776-1835), an outstanding representative of German humanism. Language, in his opinion, helps people to cognize the world and at the same time this cognition depends on language, "every language describes a circle around a nation it belongs to, from which a person is entitled to go out in so far as he or she enters the circle of another language" (*Humboldt, 1984*).

The ideas of W. von Humboldt have been developed by A. A. Potebnya (1835-1891), one of the most renowned philologists of the 19th century. Considering and significantly reconsidering the ideas of a German philosopher in his book "Thought and Language", A. Potebnya agreed with Humboldt's thesis on the connection of language with „the spirit of a people" as a whole. He found the organic participation of a national language not only in the formation of human world perception but also in the very development of the thought, "A person, speaking in two languages, passing from one to another, simultaneously changes the character and direction of the flow of the whole thought and, besides, in such a way that the effort of his will changes merely the rut of the thought, but only indirectly influences its subsequent flow. This effort may be compared with what a switchman does, shunting a train on other rails" (*Potebnya, 1976*).

At the beginning of the 20th century American linguists E. Sapir (1884–1939) and his disciple B. L. Worf (1897–1941) developed a theory of "linguistic relativity" underlain by the thesis that people see the world in different ways — in the light of his or her native tongue.

They attempted to prove that distinctions among "Middle European" (western) culture and other cultural worlds (in particular, the culture of North American Indians) were conditioned by the distinctions in languages. E. Sapir proceeded from the assumption that people lived not only in the material and social world as it was then accepted to think: in a significant degree they all were in power of their concrete language, which became a means of expression in a certain society. According to his opinion, we hear and generally perceive the world around just exactly this way but not otherwise, mainly owing to the fact, that our choice at its interpretation is predetermined by language habits of our society (*Sapir, 1934*).

Nowadays it is quite evident, that for considering questions on language world models, concerning the relations between language and culture the co-operation is required among linguists and scientists of other specialities. The approach to studying these issues must be complex. At this one should never depreciate the significance of the theory of "linguistic relativity", elaborated by E. Sapir and B. Worf for the history of linguistics and solving the problem of "national culture and its language". Its significance is not in settling but in new raising of the questions, about which linguistics has forgotten for a certain period of time.

In the 60-s of the last century numerous experimental verifications of the hypothesis "linguistic relativity" were conducted, in the course of which it was elucidated that language is not a determinant factor of culture, though it plays a significant role in its exclusiveness and originality. In this question "the linguistics of universals" played an important role, the outstanding representatives of which were Roman Jakobson and Uriel Weinreich as well as a number of others. They singled out, morphological, phonological, lexical and grammatical, universals and also spoke on the necessity to operate „general regularities”, governing the relations among language units of different levels” (*Jakobson, 1993*). Of special importance for them was the connection of certain universals with semantics.

Human Culture is not in Captivity of Language

At the present stage of the Humanities development it is already perfectly true, that people's culture is not in captivity of language. The world model of one's native tongue is not an insurmountable barrier for another world vision: a person builds other "world models", e. g. philosophical, biological or physical and with sufficient reliability translates texts from one language into another even in those cases when there are numerous century differences between languages as regards their historical development. Though not language but people create culture, for every person the world of his or her native tongue is "the household of being", the most intimate bosom of culture" (*Heidegger, 1993*). It is a natural psychological "environment of man's inhabitation", this figurative and mental "air", with which his or her consciousness breathes and lives" (*Mechkovskaya, 1998*).

A significant part of spiritual culture of any nation is realized through his or her language. And as we are interested in the process of nomination in the course of entering the sphere of a foreign language culture, so it is necessary to emphasize, that any culture consists of a great number of spiritual and material elements, each of which has its own language unit intended to render it. The language of a native speaker as a representative of a given culture, used as a principal means of communication, is an inalienable condition of modern culture existence. From this point of view **language may be considered as a communicative component of culture.**

Language is a universal semiotic system, meeting the needs of human intercourse in the most versatile communicative situations. Language potential is enormous, but its realization is limited by the factor of language economy, the action of which is manifested in the fact, that at every stage of developing a culture and language community there is such an arsenal of

expressive means which is sufficient for realizing the adequate process of communication (Bloomfield, 1989; Serebrennikov, 1970; Paul, 1960; Lyons, 1968).

The action of the principle of language economy is expressed at the lexico-semantic level in restraining the replenishment growth of the word-stock with new language units. The number of meanings allotted in a certain language continuum depends on the subdivisions of it which are essential for human practice. Moreover, these meanings are as discrete as the level of experience elaboration in the denotative sphere. In other words, the communicative potential of any language system is realized only partially, to the degree, which is necessary for a certain culture (Coseriu, 1976).

Differentiation of Cultures

Orientation of language at numerous coexisting cultures is not monosemantic; therefore the global notion of "culture" needs differentiation from the point of view of historical closeness of language and culture. From the position of a concrete language all the cultures are subdivided into internal and external.

The internal culture belongs to a native speaker, who is a communicative component. Speech communication, in the course of which language is turned to the sphere of its historically attended culture, is *intra-cultural communication*. It is especially evident on the examples of set phrases taken from the Holy Scripture: *the land of Canaan - the Promised Land, New Jerusalem - paradise, the ideal society; (as) meek as Moses - (as) gentle (meek) as Moses, modest; Sodom and Gomorrah - a vicious, sinny place.*

The external cultures - are foreign (from the position of a certain language) that may be rendered by other languages. Accordingly, communication in the process of which language is addressed to some external culture is *external culture communication*. In the course of communication a person may use his or her native tongue, in this case one may speak both about native language communication and may use a non-native (the second) one - a foreign language communication. Consequently, the external and internal culture communications may be of native and foreign tongue, e. g.: *nuclear Armageddon - the third world war; the Modern Babylon - contemporary luxurious and full of temptations city (often London); the Vicar of Christ - (the Deputy of Christ) the Pope of Rome; Pilate voice - a loud voice delivering a pompous speech; the English Solomon - the king of Jacob I (1603-1625); the Solomon of France - the king of Carl V (the Wise) (1364-1380); Solomon's wisdom - great wisdom.*

Predominant and genetically primary type of language communication is internal. Historically, in the first instance, the resources, necessary for communication by the members of cultural and language society in the situations, the theme of which is culture of native speakers, that is their internal culture. It is in this situation that „the national and cultural language functions are manifested, reflecting and consolidating real things and notions worked through by historical experience of a given nation and indebted by its existence to specific conditions of a person's working social, public and cultural life. Language, in such a way is the primary means of nominative codification of the internal culture. One of the leading language properties is its uniqueness entitling a person to carry out not only intra-cultural but also intercultural communication, the success of which depends on shared associations" (Hirsch, 1988). To be a full value member of any culture means mastering the sense of information shared by its representatives.

Religious and Cultural Correlation in Biblical Phrases

Religion as the most important part of world culture has always been interacting with languages of different peoples. The Holy Scripture may serve as a convincing example of it, having traces of material and spiritual culture of the past, the emergence and change of moral orientations and social practices, which are far distant from us both chronologically and territorially. A great number of biblical texts reiterated at church services, in everyday life of ordinary people and high society in the form of authoritative citations have become a usual appurtenance of versatile expressions and reproduced turns of speech.

The Holy Scripture is one of the sources of international phraseology, a very important element linking fast languages of the Christian World. The content wealth of corresponding text fragments, their high aesthetic virtues promoted the process of phraseologization to a significant degree. In their bulk there are idioms and aphorisms accentuatedly expressing „completed thoughts” emotionally rendered in their vivid original speech design. The expressive richness, fine laconicism of the majority of phraseological bibleisms ensure the possibility of pondering and further content replenishment, e. g.

Cain left the presence of Yahweh and settled in the Land of Nod, East of Eden (Jones, 1967: The Jerusalem Bible, Genesis, 3:18).

The Land of Nod is "the country of sleep".

A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight (Jones, 1967: The Jerusalem Bible, Matthew, 3:6).

A voice cries in the wilderness is a lonely person.

Do not give dogs what is holy... (Jones, 1967: The Jerusalem Bible, Matthew, 6:16) = *do not trust worthless people.*

Not only international phraseology was formed on the basis of biblical texts, but also nationally colourful bibleisms in different languages, e. g. *the salt of earth — someone who is ordinary but good and honest; the mote (a very small piece of dust) in thy brother's eye; Noah's Ark — a quiet safe place; a dove of Noah — the symbol of peace, etc.*

Conclusions

The originality of biblical phraseology of any language is created both under the influence of linguistic and extralinguistic factors, which in their totality form linguocultural peculiarities with their remarkable stylistic colouring and appurtenance mainly to bookish speech. As the Bible is one of the richest sources of phrases, a great number of which are international, so the biblical phraseology may be considered to be a powerful element of international communication among peoples belonging to the Christian World on different continents.

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