

REV. HENRYK PAPROCKI'S CONTRIBUTION TO POLAND'S ORTHODOX TRANSLATION¹

TARAS SHMIHER*

IVAN FRANKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF LVIV

*Dedicated to the Ukrainian Warriors,
whose faith and fire defend us
against the Russian invasion of 2022.*

Abstract: The article discloses the history and state of religious translation in Poland via the prism of one confession (the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church) and of one translator (Rev. Prof Henryk Paprocki). Although the translation history of the Orthodox Liturgy in Poland is not so short, its achievements centred around the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom and prayer-books, while the large-scale program of translating Orthodox liturgical texts into Polish is still a one-man enterprise. This state of arts postpones the time of possessing the full Polish-language corpus of Orthodox liturgical texts, but it also means that the academic and ecclesiastical reception of these translations is slow and sporadic, and in many cases, the translator remains alone in shaping translation strategies for highly authoritative texts as those for liturgical praxis.

Key words: religious translation, liturgical translation, Orthodox believers, Catholic milieu, translation personology

1. Introductory Remarks

Religious pluralism and tolerance are not only grounded on common ethical views and behavioural practices. The life of texts or books can be strongly influenced by the patterns of political and societal ethos, but texts and books can also greatly impose on these patterns.

The aim of the paper is to clarify the position of a religious translator as a subject of religious translation and an object of cultural and historical process. The scene of action is Poland, a predominantly Roman Catholic country. During the Christian history of Poland, Orthodox communities predominantly kept a minor place in the dominant

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* taras.shmiher@lnu.edu.ua



political and religious narrative, but their ethnic calls stimulated interesting projects even in liturgical translation.

2. Background from Translation History

Liturgical translation for Orthodox believers in Poland is mainly traced from the 19th century when some sporadic attempts were made during Poland's incorporation in the Russian Empire where Russian Orthodoxy 'reigned.' In 1823, the Warsaw censor permitted the publication of the Rite of blessing water during the feast of Epiphany (Obrządek 1823). This little book contains no preface nor any other notes about the publisher, its circulation and data about translation of other rites which might have been possible. The title page reads that it was a translation from Russian, but most of all, it means Church Slavonic.

When A. N. Muravyov published his bestselling collection "Letters on worshipping in Eastern Catholic Church" (1836), he did not imagine that he could contribute to the Polish Orthodox translation as well. Parts of his collections were translated by Emilia Jarocka (though K. Estreicher claimed it was Prof. Feliks Jarocki) and published as two separate Polish-language manuals: "A Description of the Holy Mass Celebrated by a Bishop of the Eastern Catholic Church" (1841) (Muravjov 1841), and "An Explanation of the Holy Mass Celebrated by a Priest of the Eastern Catholic Church" (1850) (Muravjov 1850). The titles are misleading: readers should not refer to any Greek-Catholic Church as being part of the universal Roman-Catholic Church. References to the Most Holy Governing Synod (Muravjov 1850: 42; 54) make it clear that it is the Mass of the Russian Orthodox Church. The contents of the books are the retelling of the canon of the Mass while the prayers and hymns were quoted in Polish translations and in Church Slavonic originals (albeit written in Roman characters).

The proclamation of Poland's independence (1918) changed the social and political conditions for religious translation. After the annexation of Belarusian and Ukrainian territories, Poland was inhabited by a large number of Belarusians and Ukrainians whose presence stimulated the establishment of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church (1924). The existence of the independent Polish Orthodox Church helped its authorities to reconsider the usage of languages in liturgy. The Ukrainians opted for their national language to be used in liturgy and achieved some promising results. The prominent contributor was Ivan Ohiyenko, an exiled minister of the Ukrainian National Republic and a professor at Warsaw University. He elaborated the theory of liturgical translation and translated the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom, Vespers and Matins, the Service for Pentecost and a prayer-book (all in 1922), the Easter Canon (1927), the Office of the Dead (1935). Although he translated into Ukrainian and for the Ukrainians, the scope and preparation of these translations instigated the Polish Orthodox Church to supplement its worshipping in Church Slavonic with some Polish-language editions. The first was a Polish-language Orthodox prayer-book for general public (Modlitewnik 1927). The next edition was a manual with prayers for school pupils (Modlitwa 1931). A number of hymns were translated in the manual for teaching Orthodox faith (Nauka 1932, republished in 1934, 1938). Finally, the main liturgical text of Eastern Christianity

was published in 1936: the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (*Święta liturgia* 1936). It was paralleled by the translation of the Office of the Dead (*Pannichida* 1936). A special edition of the prayer-book for Orthodox soldiers appeared in 1937 (*Przyjacieli* 1937) (2nd edition in 1939). These translations were blessed and approved for official use by Metropolitan Dionisii (Valedinsky).

The start of the active period of Orthodox translations in Poland was interrupted by the Second World War. After the collapse of the Polish State, Polish Orthodox Soldiers served in army formations around the world. Liturgical translation travelled with the soldiers, and a Polish-language Orthodox prayer was published in the Kenyan city of Nairobi (*Modlitewnik* 1944). It summarized translation activities of Rev. Michał Bożerianow, a Belarusian priest who serves for Orthodox soldiers in Polish battalions. Afterwards, it was only the philological translation by Prof. Witold Klinger under the revision of Serafin Korczak-Michalewski in 1963: the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (*Liturgia* 1963). So, the achievements of Polish-language Orthodox liturgical translation were rather limited when Henryk Paprocki entered the scene.

3. Personality and Principles

Rev. Prof Henryk Paprocki (b. 1946) is a Polish Orthodox priest, graduate of the Catholic University in Lublin (1972), Doctor of Theology (1978, the St Serge Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris) and a very active member in the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Having received a profound education, he is a speaker of Polish and a good connoisseur of Old Greek, Church Slavonic, French and Russian.

The principles used by Paprocki in his translations are briefly discussed by himself in the reviewing article of 2012 (Paprocki 2012). Despite its brevity, they are very precise, embrace all the facets of liturgical translation and pose deep methodological questions which each liturgical translator should cope with. The principles can be summarized in the following statements:

1) Each translation is done from the Greek original but sometimes it is necessary to refer to the Church Slavonic text which can contain some local dogmatic differences or expressive deviations from the initial Greek prototext. In addition, a translator should be very careful with the Church Slavonic text which is full of interlingual homonyms which easily distort the message of a textual fragment.

2) The Greek text is poetic, and its aesthetics is founded on complicated and sophisticated vocabulary as well as fanciful syntax, but it remains a piece of poetry with its aims and scope of influence.

3) Each translator should keep in mind the biblical lexis which is the foundation of later liturgical expressions, and staying in the pincers of two variants, the option of the biblical origin is bound to be decisive.

4) Religious terms are present in religious texts of various genres. Terms of Eastern Christianity and Greek origin already function on the Polish-language space, but they are non-understandable and require more descriptive paraphrases. This claims for the revision and introduction of new terms into Polish Orthodox discourse instead of tradition loan words.

The only point left without discussion was the perception of Orthodox texts by Catholic believers and their mental substitution of Orthodox phenomena for Catholic ones when the terms are identical in both traditions.

Interestingly, but all Byzantine liturgical books were completely translated into only one West-European language: French, which can also help other translators to search for relevant translation strategies. Paprocki translates from originals, though in religious praxis sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between an original and a real translation. Most Orthodox liturgical texts came from Byzantium in the Greek language, but local churches amended them according to their needs and dogmatic visions. Thus, today's texts in Church Slavonic but from different churches may differ or contradict. This is a pitfall for translation quality assessment: the analysts must remember the affiliation of a translator to a liturgical tradition and correctly identify the original. Rev. Paprocki worked with the Greek-language originals but when necessary, he opted for the variant accepted in the Church Slavonic texts which are used in the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church and remain identical to those in the Russian Orthodox Church.

4. Translations and Their Reception

The translations done by Rev. Henryk Paprocki from 1974 onwards constitute a well-designed program of presenting the writings of Eastern Christianity for Polish speakers, despite the fact that its character looks like a one-man enterprise. The initiation was the translation of all the liturgies connected with the text of St John Chrysostom, namely: liturgical prayers from the liturgies of St John Chrysostom and St Basil the Great as well as the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (Jan 1974: 7-151). It was published by the Academy of Catholic Theology, but Patristic writings are equally accepted by both Western and Eastern Churches, so the connection between the translated author and the publisher is not surprising.

The similar collection was published in 1988 under the title "Mystic Supper: Eucharistic Anaphoras of Christian Orient" (Wieczerza 1988). Paprocki collected and translated various liturgical anaphoras of three types – Alexandrian, Antiochian and Syriac Eastern – which influenced Coptic, Ethiopian, Byzantine, Antiochian, Maronite, Armenian and some other liturgical traditions. This academic edition of translations with a profound introduction and comments opened the heritage of Eastern Christianity for Polish readers.

The cult of St Mary is especially strong in Poland. In religious perspective, it covers composing hymns as well as researching Marian poetry. The latter aspect produced a fundamental multi-volume edition "Texts about Mother of God" dedicated to Marian writings in different rites where Paprocki contributed as well: for the volume "Orthodoxy," he translated the Office of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Office of the Dormition of the Theotokos as well as Symeon the Logothete's Canon of the Crucifixion of our Lord and the Lamentation of the Most Holy Theotokos (Teksty 1991: 1; 17-52) and the Office of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple and the Rite of the Burial of the Most Holy Theotokos (Teksty 1991: 2; 7-50); for the volume

“Pre-Chalcedonian Churches,” these were anaforas in honour of the Theotokos from the Ethiopian and Armenian Churches (Teksty 1995: 27-36, 137-144).

The liturgical translations usually pass a long way to their readership because of long churchly bureaucratic procedures of approval and approbation. This is why some translations were published as separate editions before entering liturgical praxis, but these editions are ‘individual’ or ‘authorial’ where the work of the translator and perhaps an editor is visible. When a liturgical text goes through the ecclesiastical approbation, the translator’s text is adjusted according to the collective view of church censors who can deviate from the translator’s initial norms and kind of distort the translation. However, the text after such consideration is viewed as ‘institutional’ or ‘authoritative.’ The ‘authorial’ editions of Paprocki’s translations are:

1995 – “Let us pray with the Eastern Church: Prayers of the Liturgy of Hours” (Modlimy 1995);

1997 – “Prayers before and after the Holy Eucharist” (Modlitwy 1997);

2000 – “The Great Canon of Repentance” by St Andrew of Crete (Andrzej 2000) (reeditions in 2015, 2019, 2021);

2003 – “Liturgies of the Orthodox Church” (Liturgia 2003) (2nd edition in 2014);

2003 – “The Holy Week and Pascha in the Orthodox Church” (Wielki 2003);

2006 – “Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos, the Inexhaustible Cup” (Akatyst 2006).

This publishing activity prepared the foundation for recognizing Paprocki’s translation not only horizontally (among wider circles of various readers like academia and clergy) but also vertically (in the hierarchy of religious reading communities) when his translations became ‘authoritative texts’ of the Church.

The first churchly recognition of his translation was the publication of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom in the official herald of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church (Liturgia 1982). However, his experience of translating liturgical texts was really recognized at the turn of the 21st century when the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church blessed and approved of their publication for its liturgical praxis²: the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (2001), the Liturgy of St Basil the Great (2005), the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts (2006), a collections of hymns for Vespers and Matins (2006), the Archieratikon (2011), the Synaxarion (2016-2021, 6 vols., uncompleted), the Euchologion (2016, 4 vols.), the Psalter (2016, 2020). The rest is published online.

One more church which acknowledged Paprocki’s translations is the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (Ukrainian Catholics of the Byzantine Rite). The public position of this Church’s clergy is that the liturgical texts of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and those of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church are the same. This vision made it possible for the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic eparchies and parishes in Poland to deploy the Polish Orthodox translations. The bilingual Ukrainian-Polish edition of the Liturgy of St John Chrysostom (Bozhestvenna 2004) (2nd edition in 2013) contained the main text along with the anaphora from the Liturgy of St Basil the Great in translations by Paprocki.

As of today, he has translated all the biblical and liturgical texts required for worshipping in church as well as some texts for worshipping in monastic praxis. Who is

² For the exact bibliographical descriptions of these editions, see the bibliography of publications by Rev. Henryk Paprocki (Kolbaia 2021).

the receiver of these translations? The overwhelming part of Orthodox believers in Poland are Ukrainians and Belarusians (whose quantity was much larger before WW2 and greatly diminished after the territory and population exchanges in the aftermath of WW2). During the course of interaction between different ethnic communities (like mixed marriages), a little group of Orthodox Poles emerged, as well. Besides, due to generations-long life of ethnic minorities in the Polish state, its members were partially or gradually assimilated, so new generations (especially descendants in mixed families) are more included in the mentality of the Polish language. Finally, the third group is a random one: these are guests who came to celebrate the Liturgy on a special occasion, and they need to have an understandable text to follow and participate even if the very worshipping is in a different language.

The fundamental aim of translation criticism is declared to analyze the translated text in order to suggest recommendations for making it better and more accurate. The painful experience of a general translator is that nowadays criticism does not perform this function, and editing is mainly the exclusive domain of the very translator and their publisher without involving various strata of specialized and general readership. According to Kolbaia's bibliography (Kolbaia 2021), some of Paprocki's translations were successful to be reviewed. Although reviewing is present, it is shallow from the viewpoint of translation quality assessment, and, thus, it does not contribute either to the criticism of liturgical translation or the translator's personality and artistry.

5. Concluding Remarks

Rev. Henryk Paprocki is a figure in the history of liturgical translation whose history is very similar in other national histories of translation. His liturgical translations are a one-man program which still managed to overcome the borders or restrictions of one Church. They can be called ecumenical, as they are (or were) practiced in churches of nominally opposite confessions belonging to Orthodoxy and Catholicism. In this perspective, these texts worked for eliminating mutual non-acceptance which emerged in different difficult periods of common history or neighbouring histories, especially in Poland.

The way of translations from the translator to the public goes sometimes not only through the publisher, but also through the censorial institutions. This is why the same liturgical text can be considered either 'ecclesiastical' (and used for public worship) or 'academic' (and used for private reading, but not for public worship) or both. Historically, these 'academic' and 'ecclesiastical' periods in the life of a book are not always contradictory, but the Church is usually a slow receiver of this high-authority product.

The most important thing in the enterprise Paprocki started is who will continue his initiative. Right now, there are no disciples and followers who could satisfy the request of further translations of texts which have not been translated into Polish or which can be retranslated according to 'higher' standards. A lot depends on the Church's abilities to deploy and popularize the texts already existing for creating interest and need in further translations.

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