

Biblical Quotations as One of the Expressive Means in the Speeches of Sir Winston Churchill

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The range of expressive means Winston Churchill uses in his speeches is enormous: from simple epithets to complex rhythmical structures. Nevertheless, they are not limited only to linguistic ones. Thus, for example, Churchill uses quotations to communicate his ideas and to persuade his audience. A very important point to be made is that the very purport (*soderžanije–namerenije*) [Akhmanova:63] of the whole talk may be hidden in one quotation. That is why it is essential to understand the quotation Churchill uses, to know the source of this or that quotation and to analyze the connection between the quotation and the talk itself. And there is no need to explain, why we consider quotations to be one of Churchill's most interesting expressive means: they animate the style and the composition, on the one hand, and they become an additional instrument of communicating information, on the other.

It will be interesting to analyze one of these quotations. I have chosen the first Churchill's speech to be delivered by him as a prime minister – “Be Ye the Men of Valor”. It was broadcast at one of the most crucial moments of the II World War. It was the time, when armies of allies were almost broken by the Nazi. And Sir Winston Churchill had to inspire his nation not to surrender and to continue resistance, which was probably the purport of the speech. Churchill ends his speech with the quotation from the Bible: “*Today is Trinity Sunday. Centuries ago words were written to be a call and a spur to the faithful servants of Truth and Justice: "Arm yourselves, and be ye men of valor, and be in readiness for the conflict; for it is better for us to perish in battle than to look upon the outrage of our nation and our altar. As the Will of God is in Heaven, even so let it be."*” These words come from the Book of the Macabees: “[58] *And Judas said, arm yourselves, and be valiant men, and see that ye be in readiness against the morning, that ye may fight with these nations, that are assembled together against us to destroy us and our sanctuary: [59] For it is better for us to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of our people and our sanctuary.[60] Nevertheless, as the will of God is in heaven, so let him do.*” [the Book of the Macabees: 3:38–60]/

First of all, the choice of the sacred context is not accidental. Judas was one of the Maccabees, Jewish rebels who fought against the rule of Hellenistic dynasty. The revolt was sparked by a rural Jewish priest from Modiin whose name was Mattathias. He refused to worship the Greek gods and fled with his five sons to the wilderness of Judea. After his death one of his sons, Judas Maccabee led the army of Jewish men to resist the Hellenistic dynasty. This revolt was seen as a war for religious freedom [Wikipedia].

In this quotation the words of Judas are so specifically outlined that one who reads or hears them feels the particular strength of this exhortation. It must not be forgotten that Judas exhorts his countrymen to defend their faith. And in the Old Testament (of course, in the New Testament too) faith was the most important value of the human being. It is not that Churchill artificially tries to insert the religious plot into his speech to elevate it; the allusion to the biblical story is rather transparent. In the Judas time people were afraid to lose the possibility to pray their God. In the Churchill's time people were about to find themselves in slavery. In both historical periods people had to protect their freedom. The biblical context supplies any description with symbolic meaning, which is a very strong rhetorical argument in the Christian, and in particular, European culture. This is how the words of Judas became an exhortation for British citizens.

It does not seem difficult to see that Churchill's quotation is not exact. There are some changes on the lexical level, when Churchill just chooses other words, which are more suitable to the current situation. But it is interesting that in this quotation Churchill quotes the words from another biblical episode: in place of “*valiant men*” Churchill says “*men of valor*”. This word combination comes from the Book of Judges: “*Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valor, and he was the son of an harlot: and Gilead begat Jephthah*” [The Book of Judges: 1:11]. Jephthah was a God-appointed man, and he headed the Israel troops in the war against the

Ammon, the nation living east of the Jordan river. Jephthah made vowed to God that, if he had returned home victorious, he would have given to God the first person to come through the doors of his house. And when he returned, his only daughter met him, and he had to keep his vow.

This episode evokes several associations. Firstly, Jephthah is a God-appointed man; he is not an ordinary person. It is obvious that Churchill tries to correlate this Old Testament hero and the British nation. Perhaps, he is convinced that the British are also a God-appointed nation and they have to head the war against the Nazi. Secondly, Jephthah is under obligations to God and he sacrifices his only daughter to keep the vow. Churchill probably wants to highlight the fact that all personal interests or devotions should be forgotten for the sake of one aim – the Freedom. And finally, the very sense of the word “valor” is more suitable for the current situation. “Valor” is “great courage, especially in war”, while “valiant” means “very brave, especially in a difficult situation” (The definitions are quoted according to Longman Dictionary).

To sum up, this quotation fulfils several functions. It highlights the purport of the speech; it creates a special atmosphere; and it definitely elevates the style, as the lexis of the biblical text belongs to the elevated register. Above all, the use of a phrase, which is not formally connected with all the remaining text, is a strong rhetorical method. Such method is sometimes used in different genres to raise retrospectively the whole context to great rhetorical height. Thus, in Matthew there is a parable: “[3]And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; [4]And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: [5]Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: [6]And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. [7]And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:[8]But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. [9]**Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.**” [Matthew (13:3–9)] The last sentence is obviously not connected with the text of the parable, but it completes the story and makes the text elevated from rhetorical point of view. The quotation in Churchill’s speech fulfills, in general, similar functions.

Литература

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