

The Story of the Bulgarian Bible¹

Dr. Dony K. Donev

My personal interest in the history of the Bulgarian Bible began in 1990, when as a young new-born Christian I received a copy of the 1924 revised edition of the Bulgarian Bible. That particular revision had been printed abroad, smuggled into Bulgaria and kept in a hiding place at the home of Pentecostal believers, members of the underground church in the Plovdiv region. My research for the next six years, along with the work of many friends from the Pravetz Church of God near Sofia, resulted in www.Bibliata.com - a website dedicated to the Bulgarian Bible, which became the first Bulgarian Bible on-line when it was launched in 1996.

Since 2001, I have been able to gather more authentic information while working with the Central Church of God in Sofia, Bulgaria. The topic of the Bulgarian translation of the Bible was a central priority during the formation of the first Sunday School Program in the history of the Bulgarian Church of God, and more particularly in the development of a lesson entitled, "My Bible." In the spring of 2002, I utilized my research on the subject while teaching Systematic Theology for the Department of Pentecostal Studies at the Bulgarian Evangelical Theological Institute (B.E.T.I). My interest in the topic along with further research led to the completion of the following study.



¹ The paper was presented at the 2006 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society in Washington, D.C.

Writing history involves much more than merely arranging facts in chronological order or thematic orientation. It is telling a story of lives and people who have come together as ordained by providence to produce results that have changed the world around them. Only stories which transform the reader are worthy to be told to a next generation and thus to become history. The history of the Bulgarian Bible is one of these stories.

This research will overview the historical development of the Bulgarian translation of the Bible with a special focus on the Protestant translation published in Constantinople in 1871. The paper will further review the origins of the existing current revisions in use and provide information about the www.Bibliata.com electronic project that makes the Bulgarian Bible available online.

The 9th century AD on the Balkan Peninsula was characterized by the strong Christian mission attempts by the Byzantine Empire toward the Slavic nations. During this process, as early as AD 881-882 the missionary-brothers Cyril and Methodius were successful in the development of a 38-symbol alphabetic structure called Glagolitza (Glagolitic). The alphabet was to be used in the translation of the Bible into the language of the Slavic tribes, some of which belonged to the First Bulgarian Kingdom. By AD 855 Clement, a student of Cyril and Methodius perfected the Glagolitza into a set of characters called the Cyrillic Alphabet. It contained 44 letters and was much more compatible with the Slavic languages than Latin or other alphabets.²

The work of the Thessalonian Brothers was used by the Bulgarian King Boris (reign AD 852-893) in the Christianization of Bulgaria in AD 863. Cyril and Methodius and their students translated the larger part of the Bible and a number of liturgical books into the Slavic vernacular. Using the newly developed alphabet for the translation of the Bible into

² Milcho Lalkov, *Rulers of Bulgaria* (Sofia: Kibea Publishing Co., 1995), 21. Dony K. Donev, *Eastern Pneumatology* (Cleveland: Church of God Theological Seminary, 1999), 5-6.

Slavic language was revolutionary in the Bulgarian liturgical context and facilitated a move toward separation from the Greek Orthodoxy.³ The first book of the Bible to be translated with the new alphabet was the Gospel of John.⁴ The Gospels, Acts and Psalms were all translated prior to AD 863. After the death of Cyril in 869, Methodius continued the translation of the Bible.⁵ The Old Testament was a translation made from the Greek Septuagint. The language of the translation was the one spoken by the Slavic tribes around Thessalonica.

During the reign of the son of King Boris, Simeon (AD 893-927), the Presbyter Gregarious was commissioned to complete another translation. The translation was carried to Russia and used by the Russian Orthodox Church with the *Ostromir Gospel* of 1056.⁶

In the fourteenth century the Bulgarian Patriarch Eftimii completed a new revision of the Slavonic text. In 1396, Bulgaria failed under the rule the Ottoman Empire where the Christian faith of the Bulgarian people was strongly persecuted.

The invention of the printing press by Guttenberg gave opportunity for some Slavic literature to be printed as well. The “middle-Bulgarian” Gospels were printed in Targovishte in 1512 in Slavic with later editions in Belgrad and Brashov. A Psalter (the book of Psalms) printed in Slavic in 1669 was compiled by Iakov Traikov, a native of Sofia, and Kara Trifun of Scopie.⁷

In 1895, A.I. Yatsimirski reports of a New Testament Bulgarian manuscript located in the Neamit monastery in Moldova established in 1779. The text had 150 double-column pages with 35 leaves bound in paper and handwriting similar to eighteenth century Neamit

³ Warren H. Carroll, *The Building of Christendom* (n/a: Christendom College Press, 1987), 359,371,385.

⁴ <http://www.makedonija.info/saints.html>

⁵ Carroll, 385. <http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps058.shtml>

⁶ First published by Vostkov, *Ostromirovo Evangelie 1056-57*. It is, perhaps, the oldest found Cyrillic manuscript.

⁷ Marin Drinov. “Iakov Traikov, a native of Sofia and Kara Trifun of Scopie,” *Iubileen sbornik na Slavyanska Beseda 1880-95* (Sofia, 1895).

manuscripts. It was in popular modern Bulgarian language and it resembled eighteenth century printed Slavic translations including a Bulgarian-Slavic glossary.⁸

By the 19th century, the Bulgarian language had departed dramatically from the old Church Slavic to a form much closer to the modern Bulgarian vernacular. The linguistic vocal system had changed drastically and the alphabet contained fewer sounds as reform reduced the number of letters used from 44 to 32. Use of the Slavic Bible had been limited to clerical and liturgical purposes only, thus remaining restricted to the common reader. Although Bulgaria had accepted Christianity as its official religion in 863 AD, a Bible in the Bulgarian vernacular had not yet been translated – an event which would dramatically change the outlook of the Bulgarian Renaissance.

Meanwhile, two events far away from Bulgaria essentially aided the translation of the Bulgarian Bible. First, the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), which began in the wake of the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century, was incorporated in London on March 7, 1804. Nine years later, on January 14, 1813, its extension, the Russian Bible Society (RBS), was founded in St. Petersburg with Prince Golytsin as president and the personal approval of Tsar Alexander.⁹ The initiators of the project were the missionaries Paterson and Pinkerton. The organization was first called the St. Petersburg Bible Society and was renamed the Russian Bible Society on September 28, 1814.¹⁰ The Russian Bible Society's governing board included the highest dignitaries of the Russian Orthodox Church.¹¹ This society would be the first one to investigate ways of translating the Bible into Bulgarian.

⁸ A.I. Yatsimirski "Slavyanskiya rukopisi nyametskago monastirya v Rumynii," DRMAD, II (1898), 17, 21. Yatsimirski published Matthew 4:12-17; 12:1-8; 21:12-17, 26:1-5 in "Malkie teksti i zametki po starinnoi slavyanskoi i ruskoi literature," IzRYS, IV (1899), 447-51 and Acts 1:1-11; 1 John 4:7-17 and 1 Cor. 14:6-12. Ibid, V (1900), 1246-50.

⁹ BFBS, 9th Report (1813), 367ff.

¹⁰ I.A. Christovich, *Istoriya perevoda biblii na ruskii yazuik* (2nd ed.: St. Petersburg, 1899), 18.

¹¹ Clarke, J. F. *The Pen and the Sword: Studies in Bulgarian History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 286.

In 1810, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) was founded in Boston, Massachusetts. It was formed due to the initiative of a group of students at the new Congregational Andover Theological Seminary led by Samuel J. Mills. The Board became the first foreign missionary society founded in America. The British and Foreign Bible Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions began their work almost simultaneously and it was not long until they reached the Bulgarian people.

Around 1806 in Bulgaria, the ex-bishop of Vratza, Sofronii published a book under the title of *Kiriakodromion*. This was a compilation of Sunday and holiday sermons translation from the 1803 Greek *Kiriakodromion* by Bishop Nikifor Theotokos. It became the first modern Bulgarian book. In his rendering, Sofronii included a translation of some Scripture references in what is called a “simple Bulgarian” language.¹² The translation was made from the Church-Slavic text of the Bible printed in Moscow. Such modification of Scriptures was a precedent resulting from the noted difference between the Church-Slavic used in liturgy and the spoken Bulgarian languages. Its occurrence indicated the inability of the Bulgarian people to understand the Church-Slavic Bible translation.

A similar attempt took place in 1821 as Vuk Karadzic published a *Supplement (Dodatak)* to the *Polyglot Dictionary*. This particular publication included the Lord’s Prayer from the Gospel of Luke in the Bulgarian language.¹³

Teodosii Bistritzki Translates the Gospel of Matthew

According to W. Canton, the Russian Bible Society announced the publication of a Bulgarian translation of the New Testament as early as 1815.¹⁴ This statement seems inaccurate as the very first mention of the Bulgarian ethnicity was made by the British and

¹² See Clarke’s “The First Bulgarian Book,” *Harvard Library Notes*, III, 7 (March, 1940), 295-302.

¹³ Clarke, J. F. *The Pen and the Sword*, 292. Clarke, *Bible Societies, American Missionaries and the National Renaissance of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937), 70.

¹⁴ *History of the British Foreign Bible Society* (London, 1904), I, 223.

Foreign Bible Society's agent in Greece, W. H. Pinkerton, in August, 1815.¹⁵ Three years later, Pinkerton had already established contact with the Bulgarian population on the Balkan Peninsula and suggested that the Society consider translating the Bible into the Bulgarian language.¹⁶ Pinkerton traveled through southern Europe from 1819-1820 while working on the Greek and Turkish translations of the Bible.¹⁷ During his search for Bulgarian translators, Greek Metropolitan of Turnovo and Exarch of Bulgaria recommended that a certain archimandrite Teodosii of the Monastery of Bistritza near Bucharest might be able to render a Bulgarian translation of the Bible.¹⁸

From Pini, the Russian consul in Bucharest, Pinkerton learned that Teodosii had already begun working on such a translation.¹⁹ It is now apparent that Teodosii started his work as early as 1819.²⁰ In 1821, Pinkerton reported that after a year of work, the translation of the Gospel of Matthew was ready. The final revision took an additional six months.²¹ In February 1822, 5,000 copies were approved for printing in St. Petersburg.²²

Unfortunately, this translation of the Gospel of Matthew was characterized by poor grammatical style because it was greatly influenced by the earlier Slavic version. Some places in the text virtually remained identical to the Slavic source and doubts about the accuracy of the translation were raised prior to its publication. Peterson proposed that only 2,000 of the 5,000 planned copies be printed.²³

¹⁵ Letter to London, St. Petersburg, August 11, 1815. BFBS, *12th Report* [1816, app., 75].

¹⁶ Roumiana Radkova, *Neofit Rilski and the New Bulgarian Upbringing* (Sofia: Narodna Prosveta, 1957), 95.

¹⁷ Letter written during the trip are in the British and Foreign Bible Society London Archives, "Agents Book" No. 2; some were published in the British and Foreign Bible Society, *Sixteenth Report* (1820), 1-42 and some Russian Bible Society publications.

¹⁸ Pinkerton to J. Owen (secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, October 27, 1819): British and Foreign Bible Society, *Sixteenth Report* (1820), 25.

¹⁹ SPb, February 7, 1820. British and Foreign Bible Society, *Sixteenth Report* (1820), 41.

²⁰ Radkova, 95.

²¹ Pinkerton to J. Owen (March 6, 1821): British and Foreign Bible Society, *Eighteenth Report* (1822), 29.

²² Pinkerton (February 20, 1822): British and Foreign Bible Society, *Eighteenth Report* (1822), 45.

²³ Kherson, July 4, 1821: British and Foreign Bible Society, "Agents Book" No. 4.

At the end of October 1822, Teodosii arrived in St. Petersburg from Hermannstadt accompanied by two deacons to oversee the publication. He insisted on printing the Slavic text in parallel with the Bulgarian. On November 19, 1823, 2,000 copies of the Gospel of Matthew²⁴ were published in St. Petersburg.²⁵ The printed document contained a two-page identification of the Bulgarian people written by Henderson.²⁶ The whole project cost the British and Foreign Bible Society over 10,000 Russian rubles.²⁷

The existence of the translation was first recorded in 1826 by Peter Keppen, a Russian scholar from St. Petersburg. He reported that during a visit to Transylvania in 1822, he had learned of a Bulgarian translation.²⁸ In the same year, based on the Russian Bible Society reports, Sarafic announced the publication of a Bulgarian New Testament.²⁹ Sarafic was obviously misled by a German magazine,³⁰ which reported the 1828 printing of the Bulgarian New Testament, which was later destroyed in St. Petersburg in 1834.³¹ Theories of the mystical disappearance of this edition vary from it being burnt to being drowned in the Catherine Canal.³² Clarke, concluded that a full 1828 (or 1829) edition of Teodosii's translation never existed because a copy of it has never been found.³³

²⁴ The exact bibliography in Bulgarian reads: Ot Matfeia sviatago blagovestvovanie / (prevel Teodosii Bistritski).

²⁵ See Elias Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian* (December 1, 1871) in *Missionary Herald* LXVIII (1872), 76.

²⁶ T.H. Darlow and H.F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of the Holy Scriptures in the BFBS Library II* (London, 1911).

²⁷ October 4 – November 24, 1823: British and Foreign Bible Society, "Correspondence Book" No. 9

²⁸ Keppen, *Bibliographical Lists*, No. 40 (April 12, 1826), 598-600.

²⁹ P.J. Sarafik, *Geschichte der slavischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten* (Budapest, 1826), 226.

³⁰ "Reise der englischen Missionare Leebes von Konstantinopel uber Adrianopol nach Ternovo in Bulgarien," *Das Ausland*, I, No. 275 (October 1, 1828), 1097-1099.

³¹ Letter to Vuk, May 4, 1834, in Lj. Stojanovic, ed., *Vukova prepiska* (Belgrade, 1909), IV, 679.

³² *Central National Historical Archive of USSR in Leningrad* (ed.n. St. Petersburg), f. 808, op. 1, ed. hr. 155. Also Radkova, 100-104 and Paterson, *Book for Every Land: Reminiscences of Labor and Adventure in the Work of the Bible Circulation in the North of Europe and Russia* (London, 1858), 366, 386-392.

³³ Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 106.

Nevertheless, some were preserved in Russian scholarly circles, while others were later distributed by Benjamin Barker during his 1823 tour of Bulgaria.³⁴ In 1902, the director of the Odessa Public Library, Popruzhenko, raised the question of the “hypothetical” London 1828 edition which he had never seen personally.³⁵ In 1903, Yatsimirski discovered several defective copies of Teodosii’s translation of Matthew. The copies contained only pages 27-96 that included the text of Matthew chapter 10:2 through 28:20.

In Search for Translators

When both British and American agents regretfully reported that Teodosii’s translation was incapable of serving as an authoritative Bible translation,³⁶ an alternative was chosen. In 1825, Leeves had acquired information of Teodosii’s translation from Pinkerton in London. At the same time, he reported that the Metropolitan of Turnovo, Ilarion was in Constantinople and was able to obtain a Bulgarian translation of the New Testament from Bucharest.³⁷

In December, 1825, Ilarion told Leeves of another translation prepared by a school master from Vratza who had priced his work at 5,000 piasters.³⁸ The American Board suggested that only the Gospel of Luke be printed as a sample.³⁹ The translation was examined by scholars in Turnovo and appeared unsatisfactory. Ilarion rejected it only to propose two new priests from his own diocese for the work.⁴⁰ At the same time, Vassil Aprilov reported that three learned men from the town of Svishtov were capable of

³⁴ R. Clogg, “Benjamin Barker’s Journal of a Tour in Thrace (1823),” *Historical Journal of the University of Birmingham*, vol. 12 (1971) 2:247-60.

³⁵ M. G. Popruzhenko, “Essays on the History of Bulgarian National Renaissance. I. The New Testament Translation in Bulgarian,” *ZhMNP*, November 1902, 3-20.

³⁶ Tlvj, “Historical view of the Slavic language in its various dialects, with special reference to theological literature,” *Biblical Repository*, 4 (Andover, 1834), 328-413, 417-532.

³⁷ Constantinople, May 24 and December 10, 1825, British and Foreign Bible Society, “Agents Book” No. 7.

³⁸ Leeves, January 2, 1826: British and Foreign Bible Society, “Agents Book” No. 7.

³⁹ Leaves to Pinkerton, March 9; April 5, 1826 (BSAR, A.B. 10).

⁴⁰ Leeves to Pinkerton, November 7, 1826: British and Foreign Bible Society, “Agents Book” No. 10.

preparing a grammar of the Bulgarian language and using it to translate the Scriptures into Bulgarian.⁴¹

The search for a Bulgarian translation of the Bible was continued by Benjamin Barker and Rev. H.D. Leeves who traveled through Bulgaria extensively from 1823-26 looking for an appropriate person to translate the New Testament in Turnovo and Bucharest.⁴² On a trip to Turnovo in November 1826, Leeves learned that at the instigation of the Archbishop of Adrianopolis, two priests from Selimnia (now Sliven) in Southeastern Bulgaria had begun to translate the New Testament into Bulgarian. They only finished part of the Gospel of Matthew when their work ceased because they learned of Ilarion's project in Svishtov.⁴³

In 1827, Leeves traveled to Bucharest to meet with Bulgarians capable of translating who had previously sent him two sample translations.⁴⁴ Despite the linguistic difficulties, he suggested that at least one gospel be translated and printed.⁴⁵

Sapunov Translates the Four Gospels

An independent⁴⁶ attempt to publish a Bulgarian translation of the New Testament occurred in 1828, when Peter Sapunov and his brother Father Seraphim published a translation of the four gospels⁴⁷ at the Bucharest metropolitan press in Wallachia

⁴¹ December 2, 1834. Vassil Aprilov, *Annex*, 17.

⁴² Clogg, 247-60.

⁴³ To Pinkerton, January 18, 1827 in British and Foreign Bible Society, *23rd Report* (1827), 478-485. Also similar but not precise in Leo Weiner, "America's Share in the Regeneration of Bulgaria (1840-1859): *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 13, (February, 1898):2:33-41.

⁴⁴ To Pinkerton, February 22, April 27, 1827: British and Foreign Bible Society, "Agents Book" No. 10.

⁴⁵ Barker to Pinkerton, Smyrna, January 31, 1827 (BSAR, ABS).

⁴⁶ Weiner, 36.

⁴⁷ The exact bibliography in Bulgarian reads: *Novyi Zavet, sirech, Chetyrite Evaggeliu na chetyrite evaggelista : prevedeny ot ellinskiia na bolgarskiia iazyk / perevoditel Petar Sapunov Triavnenyn. Bukuresht : Sviata mitropoliia, [1828]*

(Romania).⁴⁸ Seraphim knew both Greek and Slavic, but in some cases preferred Slavic words instead of Bulgarian ones. Greek, Wallachian (Romanian) and Slavic texts of the New Testament were used as sources for the translation.⁴⁹ The final version was completed in Eastern dialect⁵⁰ apparently before Teodsii began his work in 1820. The printed edition, however, was not finished until almost a decade later due to financial difficulties. The original idea was to publish and distribute the four gospels to help pay for the printing of the rest of the New Testament. Unfortunately, Sapunov did not begin printing until 1827 after the death of his brother Serafim.

After additional delays, 1,200 copies were printed in 1828. Although the whole New Testament was translated, only the four Gospels were printed on cheap paper as Matthei Babyanov was printer and Slav Kanyuv of Kalofer was typesetter. The books of Acts and Apocalypse were to follow shortly. Sapunov personally distributed 400 copies over the next six years at ten piasters each.⁵¹ This circulation was limited due to the title page inscription of “the coming of the army of the mighty empire of all Russia.”⁵²

In 1834, after confirming with the Protosingellos of Tarnovo that the translation was indeed made in the current Bulgarian vernacular, Benjamin Barker of the British and Foreign Bible Society purchased the remaining 800 copies for about 50,000 piasters.⁵³ Then, in 1835, Barker received two offers for the reprinting of Sapunov’s New Testament. The first one was by Reverend Daniel Temple’s press in Malta, which later moved to Smyrna, and the

⁴⁸ Radkova, 100-104. Also Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian* and Elias Riggs, “For the Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the First Bulgarian Periodical,” *Zornitza* XIX:28 (July 9, 1894), 100. Also Clarke, J. F. *The Pen and the Sword*, 292.

⁴⁹ Opruzenko, M.G. “Ocherki po istorii vozrozhdeniya bolgarskavo naroda. I: Prevody novogo zaveta na bolgarskii yazyk I ih izdaniyq,” *ZhMNP* (Novemeb, 1902), 17-19 and Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 187.

⁵⁰ S. Mladenov review of Pogorelov, *Opis* (ABSPH, XXXIX [1925], 123).

⁵¹ Blutte’s reply to Barker. Bucharest: January 31, 1833 (A. B. 18).

⁵² Reproduced in *Harvard Library Notes*, 3, 299.

⁵³ Weiner, 36.

second one from Josiah Brewer and his partner, A. Damian from Constantinople.⁵⁴ Brewer offered to print 5,000 copies for the price of \$4,500 and Barker accepted it.

Unfortunately, Sapunov's translation also contained a great number of linguistic errors and was not well received by the Bulgarian population.⁵⁵ Although Barker suggested reprinting the Gospels and purchasing the rest of the translation manuscripts,⁵⁶ a Bulgarian teacher from Smyrna by the name of Konstantin Fotinov examined Sapunov's translation and claimed that he was able to produce a better one. Fotinov quickly submitted to Barker three sample chapters from the Gospel of John translated from modern Greek that were superiors to Sapunov's translation.⁵⁷

In his search for a proper translator of the Bulgarian New Testament in the 1820s and 1830s, H.D. Leeves also came in contact with Sapunov. Leeves' opinion stopped the missionaries from further publishing and using Sapunov's translation.

Neofit Rilsky Translates the Complete New Testament

In 1835, Benjamin Barker met in the town of Gabrovo with Neofit (Petrov) Rilski who was recommended by the Archbishop of Tarnovo Illarion⁵⁸ to complete a new Bulgarian translation of the New Testament.⁵⁹ It is not clear if this action was coordinated with the Constantinople Greek Patriarchy.⁶⁰ Neofit accepted the offer at the end of September or the beginning of October, 1835 and began working immediately. The Gospels

⁵⁴ Also spelled A. Damianov, as on the front page of the first edition of the Bulgarian New Testament in 1840. The exact bibliography in Bulgarian reads: Novyi Zavet gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista / sega novo prevedennyi ot slavenskago na bolgarski iazyk ot Neofita ieromonakha P. P. Ryltsa i s prilezhaniem pregledan i odobren ot preosviashtenneishago i premudrago mitropolita Ternovskago G. G. Ilariona. Smirna: tip. A. Damianova i sodruzhestva, 1840.

⁵⁵ Hristo Kodov, "Toward the History of Sapunov's Translation of the Holy Gospel (tr.n. New Testament), *Rodina* (a.n. magazine), (1939) book II.

⁵⁶ Smyrna, March 4, 1834 (A.B. 18).

⁵⁷ May 21, (A.B. 18).

⁵⁸ Perhaps Illarion of Cyprus.

⁵⁹ Radkova, 100-104.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 96.

of Matthew and Mark were completed by November⁶¹ and a draft of the first three Gospels was ready in December, 1835.⁶²

On January 12, 1836 Neofit reported the completion of the four Gospels.⁶³ In the beginning of February, 1836, Benjamin Barker prepared the final legal arrangements, sending copies to Smyrna and to Neofit.⁶⁴ The price for the complete translation was 5,000 Turkish grosha.⁶⁵ The contract was dated February 19, 1836 and signed by Neofit in Gabrovo on March 23, 1836.⁶⁶ Barker asked Illarion to personally check the finished translation, but having very limited time Illarion left the complete work to Neofit's "conscience."⁶⁷

The translation of the book of Acts was begun on February 29, 1836 and finished by April 11. Twelve days later, Neofit finished correcting the Gospels and Acts and notified Barker of his proceeding with the rest of the translation.⁶⁸ He also stated that he had used Illarion's Greek translation of the New Testament published in 1828 for comparison. Neofit purposefully excluded all his translation notes. His only requirement was that he be allowed to oversee the actual printing process, projecting the full translation would be ready no later than September, 1836.

In May, 1836 Neofit sent half of the translated New Testament to Barker in Smyrna.⁶⁹ The Epistles were translated between May and September,⁷⁰ but on September 15, 1836 the Archbishop of Tarnovo, Illarion, ordered him to stop the translation.⁷¹ The

⁶¹ Ivan Snegarov, *Contribution to the Biography of Neofit Rilski* (Sofia, 1951), 86-94.

⁶² "Kratki belezki vurhu zivotut i deyaniata na Daskal Neofit," *Zornitsa* VI (1881), October 13, 1881.

⁶³ Snegarov, 84.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

⁶⁵ The original contract in Greek is published in SbNU (Sofia, 1891), vol. V, 639-40; 5,000 grosha equaled 4,500 piasters or approximately £45.

⁶⁶ Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 228.

⁶⁷ Snegarov, 100-101.

⁶⁸ Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 228.

⁶⁹ Snegarov, 103.

⁷⁰ Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 229.

⁷¹ Snegarov, 133.

Constantinople Patriarchy instructed the destruction of all copies of the partial Protestant translation which were apparently in circulation at the time. The correspondence between Neofit and Barker ceased for two years.

Meanwhile, Benjamin Barker supplied A. Damian's Press with a Slavic type for the printing from Leipzig.⁷² The type probably came from the press of Brettkopf and Hertel or Tauchnitz and was used on a press brought from America to Constantinople by the missionaries.⁷³ During this time, the Gospels and Acts were printed consecutively in 1838 and 1839, and then frequently reprinted.⁷⁴

In the beginning of 1838, Neofit again established contact with Barker and on April 18 he sent the complete translation of the New Testament in Bulgarian to Smyrna.⁷⁵ At the request of Benjamin Barker in 1838, Dr. Elias Riggs, who at the time was working on his *Grammatical Notes on the Bulgarian Language* (published in Smyrna, 1844), examined the first edition of Neofit Rilski's translation.⁷⁶ Riggs, on his part, used the help of his friend and earlier publisher of the Bulgarian New Testament, Konstantine Fotinov.⁷⁷

After the revision was completed in May 1838, Barker reported to Neofit that the New Testament was finally in print.⁷⁸ On October 7, 1838 Barker sent the first page of the printed translation to Neofit asking for his confirmation on the chosen font. A similar page had been sent through Illarion as early as 1837, but unfortunately Neofit never received it.

In 1840, 5,000 copies of the first complete translation of the New Testament in Bulgarian were printed in Smyrna by the British and Foreign Bible Society.⁷⁹ The title page

⁷² Clarke, J. F. *The Pen and the Sword*, 293.

⁷³ December 28, 1836; February 4, 1837 (BSAR, A.B. 18).

⁷⁴ Weiner, 37-38.

⁷⁵ Shishmanov, *Novi Studia*, 98.

⁷⁶ Weiner, 37. Also Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

⁷⁷ Shishmanov, *K. Fotinov*, 655

⁷⁸ Snegorov, 198.

⁷⁹ Weiner, 37-38. Also Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

read: *“The New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Now newly translated from Slavic into Bulgarian language by Neofit, Ieromonah P.P. of Rila. And diligently examined and approved by the very consecrated and wise Metropolitan of Tarnovo, Illarion. In Smyrna. In the Press of A. Damianov and Company. 1840.”*

On August 13, 1840, Neofit’s student Iliya Vassilev reported to him that the printing of the translation was completed and that he was sending Neofit a copy.⁸⁰ A few more copies were brought to Odessa by Barker in the summer of 1840. By October, 374 more copies were distributed in Uzhundjovo and Adrianopolis, 600 were ordered from Bessarabia⁸¹ and 220 were sent to Raino Popovich in Karlovo.⁸² In 1841, an ABCFM agent reported that 2,000 New Testaments were sold in less than one week.⁸³ The 1842 Uzhundjovo Fair also sold 146 copies.⁸⁴ By 1844, more than 3,000 additional copies had been distributed among the Bulgarians.⁸⁵

The Greek Patriarchy reacted immediately. Orthodox metropolitans throughout Bulgaria were organized in a campaign to find and destroy every copy of the “Protestant” New Testament.⁸⁶ The Bulgarian population, however, refused to give up the new translation and boycotted the Orthodox campaign almost everywhere.⁸⁷ Hristo Pulekov from the town of Koprivshitzta reported that the Plovdiv metropolitan had ordered the confiscation of all New Testaments in the town. The people of Koprivshitzta, however, refused to obey the order. A similar report came from Kesarii Popvasilev from Pazardjik.⁸⁸

⁸⁰ Shishmanov, 229.

⁸¹ S.C. November 30, 1841.

⁸² Shishmanov, *Novi Studii*, 442, n.2.

⁸³ <http://www.mtwbg.com/bgrmissions.htm>

⁸⁴ BFBS 39th Report (1843) lxxxiii.

⁸⁵ BFBS 40th Report (1844) lxxxvii.

⁸⁶ Shihmanov, 225, 239.

⁸⁷ Radkova, 107.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 233-34.

In response, the Greek Patriarchy explained its actions with errors in the translation. To verify the claim, Hadji Gero Dobrev from Koprivsthitca sent a copy of the New Testament to his son Nayden Gerov in Odessa. After several of Odessa's teachers examined the text, Nayden responded that no errors were found in it.⁸⁹

The persecution from the Greek Patriarchy only elevated the interest of the Bulgarian people in the new translation. The New Testament completely sold out. A second edition was printed in Smyrna in 1850 with very few corrections from the first 1840 edition.⁹⁰ A third edition followed in 1853 with 15,000 copies. A thousand copies were immediately sent to Bulgaria by S. Mayers and 2,000 more were sent to the Uzhundzhovo Fair for distribution.

The fourth edition was published in 1857 in Bucharest and for the first time civil characters type was used. Because the edition was defective, the order was cancelled.⁹¹ In 1859, two more editions were published. One was printed in Bucharest and one in London which mistakenly had "third edition" instead of fourth imprinted on the front page.⁹² In 1866, a new "pocket" edition with text revised by Riggs and Long was printed in Constantinople. The New Testament was revised and reprinted a total of nine times.⁹³

⁸⁹ Naiden Gerov, *Arhives*, vol. 1 Sofia, 1911, 335 (delo No. 538)

⁹⁰ There is an argument of the year of the second edition being 1843 instead 1850. Manyo Stoyanov, *Bulgarian Awakening Publications*, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science), 263-No. 5614. Also Clarke, J. F. *The Pen and the Sword*, 294.

⁹¹ Darlow and Maule, 1903-11.

⁹² Letter from Nephit Rilski to Cvetan Nedyov, *Materials on the History of the Bulgarian Awakening*, SbNU, 1891 vol. VI, 461. The exact Bulgarian bibliography reads: Novyi Zavet na gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista : verno i tochno preveden ot pŭrvoobrazno-to. [3. izd.] – Tsarigrad : knigopech. na v. Makedoniia, 1872. and Novyi zavet na gospoda nashego Iisusa Khrista : verno i tochno preveden ot pŭrvoobrazno-to. [Drugo 3. izd.] - Tsarigrad : knigopech. na v. Makedoniia, 1872.

⁹³ The editions were as follows: 1840, 1850, 1853, 1857, two in 1859, two in 1866 and two in 1867. Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian* and Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 308.

Around 1839 an earlier attempt was made by the British and Foreign Bible Society to hire Konstantin Fotinov to translate the Gospels.⁹⁴ Fotinov, however, used a combination of literary translation and corrupt Church-Slavic. The resulting text was not well understood by the general Bulgarian population and was rejected by the British and Foreign Bible Society as inappropriate for the task.

The Whole Bible Translated in Bulgarian

By 1840, the Bulgarian language had dramatically changed and the Eastern (Tarnovo) dialect was widely adopted even in the Western (Macedonian) parts of the Balkan Peninsula. Since the New Testament had been earlier translated in the Western dialect, a revision was a must.⁹⁵ Fotinov, along with the often-forgotten Stoyno (Sava) Iliev Radulov,⁹⁶ was instrumental in the revision of the 1840 New Testament edition to the Eastern Bulgarian dialect.⁹⁷

Fotinov also worked on the later editions along with Dr. Elias Riggs who had acquired significant knowledge of the Bulgarian language.⁹⁸ Riggs met with Fotinov in 1842 (not 1844 as often stated)⁹⁹ and invited him to participate in the translation of tracts for the American Tract Society.¹⁰⁰ Fotinov worked on the translation of the Old Testament in Bulgarian between 1851 and 1858 and Riggs assisted him in 1858.¹⁰¹ An edition of the Psalms translated by Fotinov was published in Smyrna in 1855,¹⁰² followed later by the

⁹⁴ See Manyo Stoyanov, "Beginning of Protestant Propaganda in Bulgaria" Bulgarian Academy of Science: Bulletin of the Institute of History, vol. 14-15 (1964), 46.

⁹⁵ Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

⁹⁶ J.F. Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 255.

⁹⁷ R. Thomson, "Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the American Mission at Constantinople," *Almanac of Missions* (American Board, 1915), 89.

⁹⁸ Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

⁹⁹ Riggs, "For the Celebration of the 50th," 110.

¹⁰⁰ Weiner, 39.

¹⁰¹ Weiner, 40.

¹⁰² Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 268.

publication of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Pentateuch in Constantinople.¹⁰³ It has been proposed that these books, as well as the rest of the Old Testament, were translated from Hebrew as they differed from the Slavic Bible used by the Orthodox Church at the time.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, Riggs traveled to the United States where he remained for two years. Upon his return, Riggs toured Bulgaria with T. Byington to study the linguistic changes occurring in the Bulgarian language.¹⁰⁵ He met with Neofit Rilski and discussed a possible revision of the Bulgarian New Testament to remove the Macedon-Serbian dialect elements.¹⁰⁶ The decision to publish the Bible in the Eastern dialect was the historical factor determining the departing of the modern Bulgarian language departed from other dialects to adopt the Eastern/Thracian one.

Apparently, by this time, parts of the Old Testament already had been translated in the Western dialect and a revision was unavoidable.¹⁰⁷ Fotinov moved to Constantinople to be closer to the revision work, but unfortunately died soon after on November 28, 1858, only a week after Riggs' return to Constantinople.¹⁰⁸ Having remained without Bulgarian help, in January 1859, Riggs invited the Bulgarian teacher, Hristodul Kostovich (Sichan Nikolov) to help him with the work. They were introduced to each other by Barker who unfortunately also died the same year. Riggs and Kostovich finished the first chapter of Exodus by the end of the month.

Early in 1860, the first volume of the Bulgarian Old Testament which contained the Pentateuch was published. The famous Bulgarian Easter followed on the Sunday of April 3,

¹⁰³ Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

¹⁰⁴ PABCFM, 16 – The Near East (1817-1919), Unit 5, 566, Vol. 6, 16.9-Mission to Turkey, 33-34; Letter from Dr. Ellias Riggs to ABS (May 1, 1880).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Also Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

¹⁰⁶ J.F. Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 292.

¹⁰⁷ Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

¹⁰⁸ Weiner, 40.

1860. As a result of centuries of religious tensions, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church rejected the Greek Patriarchy and established its own Exarchy in 1870.¹⁰⁹

In 1862, Long¹¹⁰ and Riggs visited the noted Bulgarian writer and poet Petko Rachov Slaveykov in Tryavna. Slaveykov agreed to help with the translation and immediately began work on revising Neofit's New Testament.¹¹¹ In the same year, the second volume of the Old Testament in Bulgarian was printed. Dr. Albert Long joined efforts to revise the New Testament into the Eastern dialect in 1863 and later assisted with the translation of the Old Testament.¹¹²

Throughout the entire year of 1863, Slaveykov worked on Neofit's translation of the New Testament, partnering with another noted Bulgarian by the name of Stoyan Michailovski (brother of Ilarion Makriopolski), who became the fifth member of Riggs' revision team.¹¹³ The actual translation of the Bulgarian Bible was conducted by Bulgarians, while the American and British missionaries assisted with the revising and printing.

The preliminary revision of the Old Testament was completed on October 10, 1863.¹¹⁴ Riggs, along with Kostovich and Long, began revising Slaveykov's revision of the New Testament based on Neofit's translation. In the beginning of 1864, Slaveykov left his home town of Tryavna and traveled to Constantinople,¹¹⁵ where the team finished the work of the translation, proofread it and prepared it for printing. The third volume of the Old Testament was completed and published in the first half of 1864. By 1865, the revision of the New Testament was completed and its new edition was published in 1866.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ See Toncho Zechev, *Bulgarskĭa Velikden* (Sofia: Anubis, 2000).

¹¹⁰ Long began his work with the Methodist Bulgarian Mission in 1857.

¹¹¹ Clarke, J. F. *The Pen and the Sword*, 295.

¹¹² Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

¹¹³ Riggs' Journal. Also, Stoyan Michailovski, *Genadie: Holy History of the Old and New Testaments* (Vienna, 1867).

¹¹⁴ Peter Mateev, *Great Supporters of the Bulgaria People* (Sofia, 1934), 23.

¹¹⁵ Riggs, Journal II, October, 1863-February 24, 1864.

¹¹⁶ Elias Riggs, *Reminiscences for My Children*, (1891) 18-25.

By this time, the printed editions of the New Testament and published portions of the Old Testament were in much demand. The missionary station in Plovdiv sold 3,624 copies of the New Testament within a month. In 1863, another 895 copies were sold in a period of seven months. In Eski Zagra (Stara Zagora) another 800 copies were sold in a month. In the middle of 1867, the first three volumes of the Old Testament were sold out and a new edition was put into print.¹¹⁷

In 1865, the final revision of the New Testament was completed. A revision of the Old Testament followed to synchronize the text with the current language. At the end of 1867, 100 pages of the final revision of the Bulgarian Bible were put into print.¹¹⁸ The same year, with the help of the American Bible Society in New York, Dr. Long printed two editions of the Bulgarian New Testament - one in new Bulgarian and one in church-Slavonic. A separate edition with the two versions in parallel was also published.

After more than 12 years of consistent labor, 3,600 copies of the complete Bible translation in Bulgarian were published in Constantinople. The publication date was June, 1871,¹¹⁹ as shown on the front page of the edition, and not 1872 as claimed by Leo Weiner,¹²⁰ nor 1864 as rendered by some following an unknown source.¹²¹ The Bible was published in two versions (large print and small print) both with references. The large print version originally was published in eight volumes and 1,060 pages.¹²² The translation came to be known as the Tzarigrad (Constantinople) edition. The first copy of the Bulgarian Bible

¹¹⁷ Letters of the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society (New York), Constantinople (June 14, 1861; May 29-30, 1863 (H39)).

¹¹⁸ Clarke, *Bible Societies*, 302, 310.

¹¹⁹ Clarke, J. F. *The Pen and the Sword*, 295. The exact Bulgarian bibliography reads: Bible. Bibliia, sirech, Sviashtenno-to Pisanie na Vetkhyi i Novyi Zavet : verno i tochno prevedeno ot purvoobrazno-to. Tzarigrad: knigopech. na A. Kh. Boiadzhiana, 1871.

¹²⁰ Weiner, 41.

¹²¹ <http://www.worldscriptures.org/pages/bulgarian.html>

¹²² Ivan Zarev, *History of the Evangelical Pentecostal Churches in Bulgaria (1920-1989)* (Sofia: 1993), 16.

received from the binders was laid on the table of the mission of European Turkey in Eski Zagra (Stara Zagora) in June of 1871.¹²³

Due to its popularity, the whole Bible was reprinted in 1871 and several reprints followed.¹²⁴ By 1879, the total number of printed and distributed Bulgarian Bibles by the so-called “Bible House” in Constantinople was 6,572 volumes.¹²⁵ Following the publication of the Bulgarian Bible, Riggs published *Harmony of the Four Gospels* (236 pages - Constantinople, 1880), *Dictionary of the Holy Scriptures* (620 pages - Constantinople, 1884), and *Commentary of the New Testament* (in 3 volumes¹²⁶ - 1894-98).¹²⁷ A revised edition of the Bible was published in 1891 in a small print version and later was reprinted in 1906 after Riggs’ death in 1901.

The Bulgarian Bible in the 20th Century

In the 20th century, the story of the Bulgarian Protestant Bible continued in four chronological periods: Toward Modernism (1900-1914), Modernism (1914-1944), Communism (1944-1989) and Postcommunism (1989-present).

The first period was characterized by frequent publications of the Bulgarian Protestant Bible with minor revisions. The Gospel of Mark with color illustrations was printed in the early 1900s by the Scripture Gift Mission. The American Bible Society printed the New Testament in New York (1906). The British and Foreign Bible Society printed a parallel New Testament with English and Bulgarian texts in Berlin (1909), the Gospel of Luke in London (1912), separate editions of the New Testament and the whole Bible in

¹²³ Riggs, *The Bible in Bulgarian*.

¹²⁴ *Bibliia, sirech, Sviashtenno-to Pisanie na Vetkhyi i Novyi Zavet : verno i tochno prevedeno ot pŭrvoobrazno-to*. [2. izd.] - Tsarigrad : knigopech. na A. Kh. Boiadzhiiana, 1871 and *Bible Bibliia, sirech, Sviashtenno-to Pisanie na Vetkhyi i Novyi Zavet : verno i tochno prevedeno ot pŭrvoobrazno-to*. [3. izd.] - Tsarigrad : knigopech. na A. Kh. Boiadzhiiana, 1874.

¹²⁵ ABCFM, 16.9 – Mission to Turkey Vol. 6 Mission to Turkey; Letter from Dr. Elias Riggs to Rev. Dr. Lilman (May 1, 1880).

¹²⁶ In this order Volume 1 (1894), Volume 2, (1897) and Volume 3 (1898).

¹²⁷ Zarev, 16.

Constantinople (1912) and concluded the period with an edition of the Psalter in London (1913).

The modern period began after World War I with a 1918 special edition of the 1912 revision of the Bible published by the American Bible Society in New York. A revision of the Four Gospels, that was started in 1913 and continued through the war by R. Thomas, T. Naidenoff, J.W. Bauird (A.B.C.F.M.), M. T. Dobrvski and J.J. Sechanov (A.M.E.M.) was printed at the Pridovrna Pечатnica (Royal Press) in Sofia by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1921. In the same year, 20,000 copies of the complete revised New Testament were published in Sofia.

Meanwhile, in 1922 a topographical copy of the Bulgarian Bible was printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society at the Kh. Mateosian's Press in Constantinople. Then, in 1923 10,000 copies of the second edition of the 1921 revision were published in Sofia. In the same year, a complete Bible, containing the 1921 revision of the New Testament with new orthography and the Old Testament in the Old Bulgarian orthography, was published at the Pridovrna Pечатnica in Sofia by the British and Foreign Bible Society. In 1924, the revised editions of the Psalter and Proverbs were published in two separate volumes in Sofia with 10,000 copies each. Finally, a complete edition of the revised Bulgarian Bible followed in the same year.

From 1925-1926, the eight volumes of the Constantinople Bible of 1871 were printed in one volume by the New York Bible Society in New York. An edition of the revised New Testament (1933) and the Bible (1940) by the British and Foreign Bible Society followed along with the Gospel of John in New York in 1944 by the American Bible Society. The 1940 edition contained only minimal changes from the 1924 revision. These two copies

would become the authoritative Bible for the Bulgarian Protestant church in its underground existence during the 45 years of the Communist Regime.

The Communist regime in Bulgaria (1944-1989) limited the translation, printing and circulation of the Bible. Yet, the Bible was printed abroad and smuggled into Bulgaria during the 45 years of the Communist Regime. Among the many known and unknown, complete and partial editions are the 1951 Geneva topographical Bulgarian Bible by the United Bible Society, the 1951 New York edition of the Bulgarian Bible by the American Bible Society, the 1965 London edition of the Bulgarian Bible, the 1967 New York edition of the Bulgarian New Testament and the complete Bible in 1980.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a number of mission organizations and publishing houses attempted to provide a new translation of the Bible in Bulgarian. In 1993 a revised Protestant New Testament was printed by Veren (Faithful) Publishers. A complete Orthodox edition was published in 1995, followed by a number of partial and complete topographical reprints and revised compilations of the Protestant text. Several among them deserve to be mentioned, including the three revisions of the complete Protestant Bulgarian Bible published by Veren (Faithful), Bulgarian Bible Society and the Bible League.

Additionally, in 2002 the Bulgarian Bible Society published a “new translation” of the New Testament that later was discovered to have relied on a Russian Orthodox version as a source and not Greek as proposed initially. Although this edition was announced as “consensual” to all Christian denominations in Bulgaria, this text was strongly influenced by the Eastern Orthodox textual tradition largely contested by the majority of known manuscript.

Also in 2002, the “Open Bible” project introduced a new version of the Bulgarian New Testament. This text was the work of a team of translators, but followed closely the

text of the Revised Protestant Bible of 1924/1940, which diminished its status from a translation to a revision with only minimal changes to the text.

A final edition was the *Greek-Bulgarian Literal Translation with the Greek Words Coded according to James Strong's Number* published by the Spring of Life Foundation in August of 2005. The interlinear attempted to provide a word-for-word rendering of the *Scrivener Textus Receptus*. Unfortunately, in their attempt to follow closely the Constantinople Bible, the authors repeated many of the mistakes made by their colleagues more than a century ago. Following earlier renderings of the New Testament text, forced the editors to translate one Greek word with a large variety of Bulgarian words which minimized the “literal” meaning of the translation. An obvious problem for the modern scholar was also the choice of source text which disregarded the existence of texts like Nestle-Aland, UBS and other critical editions.

After careful examination of the modern development of the later publications of the Bulgarian Bible, it is safe to conclude that unfortunately none of the new publications can be considered a new translation. Reasons for this include the close dependency on the older Bible texts used in churches, inadequate preparation on the part of the translators, clear understanding of the need of a new translation and its continuous effect, and the lack of preparedness on part of the churches to receive such text.

One exception to the above conclusion, which paradoxically serves as a confirmation to the listed reasons, is the modern Bulgarian translation published in 2000 by the World Bible Translation Center. This text, much similar to the English Living Bible, was not received as a dependable translation and was wrongfully rejected by the Bulgarian Christian community without clear understanding of its well-fulfilled mission and purpose.

The Bulgarian Bible in the Public Square

Because no new complete translation of the Bulgarian Bible has been rendered since the publication of the 1871 Constantinople Bible, further research on the subject should propose the process and guidelines for a new translation of the Bulgarian Bible. An internet project which began a decade ago under the title www.bibliata.com (trans. “theBible.com”) may be the alternative gateway toward the solution of this problem. The online project openly addresses the text, story and problem of the Bulgarian Bible, bringing it to the public square and challenging scholars, ministers and students of the Bible to approach the available Bulgarian versions with a new mindset and to participate in the creation of a new translation of the Bulgarian Bible.

This project began over ten years ago as a small website offering the text of the Bulgarian Bible free of charge. Today Bibliata.com is an internationally recognized website serving over 3,000 members with more than 11GB of information and 250GB of monthly traffic operating on three servers located in Bulgaria and abroad. Several of the services offered are as follows:

1. Electronic Bible parallel with 20 Bible versions and search engine
2. Dictionary, commentaries, study topics, Sunday School lessons and tests
3. Comprehensive library of theological texts
4. Web-based Christian radio station combining all available audio resources as follows: 500 titles by Bulgarian Christian artists, Bulgarian Audio Bible, 400+ audio and video sermons and a five minute news block on the hour combined in a total of over 1TB of information broadcasted around the clock
5. Bible software for Windows, Linux and Mac operating systems
6. Children’s Bible stories in PDF and video format

7. Bible ticker, web-based chat and browser toolbar
8. Bible software for GSM (Java and Symbian based), PDA and WAP
9. Bible verse via SMS sent to 2,500 cell phones daily
10. An annual National Bible Tour when our team travels to various Bulgarian towns holding youth rallies with Bible studies, history lectures, Christian sermons, motivational messages, video presentations and gospel concerts.

The strength of the project is its innovative media capabilities incorporated through an internet accessible communication center that encourages direct participation. The main advantage remains the free use of all tools, products and services available.

In this context, in 2004-2005 a team of over 40 members of the www.bibliata.com community completed an electronic edition of the Constantinople Bible of 1871. The edition was completed in three phases (1) preparatory in which decisions were made about the edition used as a source and an adequate replacement of non-existent Bulgarian letters which had remained in the text, (2) scheduling of work assignments and actual editing of the text by chapters and (3) finalizing stage in which the text was compiled as one complete edition. The text is now being proofed and prepared for a jubilee printed publication. The complete New Testament and larger part of the Old Testament are already available online.

The online community of www.bibliata.com represents a large auditoria of scholars, ministers and students of the Bible. A number of serious scholastic discussions are available about all given Bulgarian version of the Bible and can be used as a background for further research toward a new Bulgarian translation.

Postscriptum

More than 100 years have passed since the Bible was first translated into the Bulgarian language in its Protestant version. The book has been persecuted by the Orthodox Greeks, Fascist Nazis and Communist atheists with one purpose – to change the Bulgarian national conscience and to lead the Bulgarian nation toward ideas of religious, military and ideological control. One thing has become clear in the past century of Bible presence in the Bulgarian land – “the word of God cannot be chained” (2 Timothy 2:9). As regimes and persecution, as well as the people who caused them are now long gone, the Bulgarian Bible continues to transform human lives. Over the past 17 years of reforms, Bulgaria has been going through severe political, economical, and social crises. Yet, in the beginning of the 21st century, the words of the Eternal Book are again a beacon of hope and spirituality for the Bulgarian people. And this is not the end of the story of the Bulgarian Bible. This is only its beginning ...

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ABCFM, 16 – The Near East (1817-1919), Unit 5, 566, Vol. 6, 16.9-Mission to Turkey.
- ABCFM, 16.9 – Mission to Turkey Vol. 6 Mission to Turkey
- British and Foreign Bible Society, 9th Report (1813).
- , 16th Report (1820).
- , 18th Report (1822).
- , 23rd Report (1827).
- , 39th Report (1843).
- , 40th Report (1844).
- , “Agents Book” No. 2.
- , “Agents Book” No. 4.
- , “Agents Book” No. 7.
- , “Agents Book” No. 10.
- , “Agents Book” No. 18.
- , “Correspondence Book” No. 9.
- Carroll, Warren H. *The Building of Christendom* (n/a: Christendom College Press, 1987).
- Central National Historical Archive of USSR in Leningrad* (ed.n. St. Petersburg), f. 808,
op. 1.
- Christovich, I.A. *Istoriya perevoda biblii na ruskii yazuik* (2nd ed.: St. Petersburg, 1899).
- Clarke, J. F., *Bible Societies, American Missionaries and the National Renaissance of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937).
- “The First Bulgarian Book,” *Harvard Library Notes*, III, 7 (March, 1940).
- *The Pen and the Sword: Studies in Bulgarian History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
- Clogg, R. “Benjamin Barker’s Journal of a Tour in Thrace (1823),” *Historical Journal of the University of Birmingham*, vol. 12 (1971).

- Darlow, T.H. and H.F. Moule, *Historical Catalogue of the Printed Editions of the Holy Scriptures in the BFBS Library II* (London, 1911).
- Drinov, Marin. "Iakov Traikov, a native of Sofia and Kara Trifun of Scopie," Iubileen sbornik na Slavyanska Beseda 1880-95 (Sofia, 1895).
- Donev, Dony K. *Eastern Pneumatology* (Cleveland: Church of God Theological Seminary, 1999).
- Gerov, Naiden. *Arhives*, vol. 1 (Sofia, 1911).
- Gospelcom.net: <http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/GLIMPSEF/Glimpses/glmps058.shtml>
- History of the British Foreign Bible Society* (London, 1904).
- "History of the Mission to Bulgaria," <http://www.mtwbg.com/bgrmissions.htm>
- Keppen, *Bibliographical Lists*, No. 40 (April 12, 1826).
- Kodov, Hristo. "Toward the History of Sapunov's Translation of the Holy Gospel (tr.n. New Testament), *Rodina* (a.n. magazine), 1939.
- "Kratki belezki vurhu zivotut i deyaniata na Daskal Neofit," *Zornitsa* VI (1881), October 13, 1881.
- Lalkov, Milcho. *Rulers of Bulgaria* (Sofia: Kibea Publishing Co., 1995).
- Letters of the American Bible Society and the American Tract Society (New York), Constantinople* (June 14, 1861; May 29-30, 1863 (H39)).
- Majedonija Info. <http://www.makedonija.info/saints.html>
- Mateev, Peter. *Great Supporters of the Bulgaria People* (Sofia, 1934).
- Materials on the History of the Bulgarian Awakening*. SbNU, 1891 vol. VI.
- Michailovski, Stoyan. *Genadie: Holy History of the Old and New Testaments* (Vienna, 1867).
- Mladenov, S. Opis (ABSPH, XXXIX [1925]).
- Opruzenko, M.G. "Ocherki po istorii vozrozhdniya bolgarskavo naroda. I: Prevody novogo zaveta na bolgarskii yazyk I ih izdaniyq," ZhMNP (November, 1902).
- Paterson, *Book for Every Land: Reminiscences of Labor and Adventure in the Work of the Bible Circulation in the North of Europe and Russia* (London, 1858).
- Pinkerton, W.H. *Letter to London*, St. Petersburg, August 11, 1815. BFBS, 12th Report

- [1816, app., 75].
- *Letter to J. Owen*, October 27, 1819: British and Foreign Bible Society, *Sixteenth Report* (1820).
- *Letter to J. Owen* (March 6, 1821): British and Foreign Bible Society, *Eighteenth Report* (1822).
- Popruzhenko, M. G. "Essays on the History of Bulgarian National Renaissance. I. The New Testament Translation in Bulgarian," *ZhMNP*, November 1902.
- Radkova, Roumiana. *Neofit Rilski and the New Bulgarian Upbringing* (Sofia: Narodna Prosveta, 1957).
- Riggs, Elias. "For the Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the First Bulgarian Periodical," *Zornitza* (July 9, 1894).
- , *Reminiscences for My Children*, (1891).
- . *The Bible in Bulgarian* (December 1, 1871) in *Missionary Herald* LXVIII (1872).
- "Reise der englischen Missionare Leebes von Konstantinopel uber Adrianopol nach Ternovo in Bulgarien," *Das Ausland*, I, No. 275 (October 1, 1828).
- Sarafik, P.J. *Goschibte der slavischen Sprache und Literatur nach allen Mundarten* (Budapest, 1826).
- Snegarov, Ivan. *Contribution to the Biography of Neofit Rilski* (Sofia, 1951).
- Stojanovic, Lj., *Vukova prepiska* (Belgrade, 1909), IV.
- Stoyanov, Manyo. "Beginning of Protestant Propaganda in Bulgaria" Bulgarian Academy of Science: Bulletin of the Institute of History, vol. 14-15 (1964).
- . *Bulgarian Awakening Publications*, (Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science).
- Thomson, R. "Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the American Mission at Constantinople," *Almanac of Missions* (American Board, 1915).
- Tlvj, "Historical view of the Slavic language in its various dialects, with special reference to theological literature," *Biblical Repository*, 4 (Andover, 1834).
- Weiner, Leo. "America's Share in the Regeneration of Bulgaria (1840-1859)": *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 13, (February, 1898).
- World Scriptures, <http://www.worldscriptures.org/pages/bulgarian.html>
- Yatsimirski, A.I. "Slavyanskiya rukopisi nyametskago monastirya v Rumynii," DRMAD,

II (1898).

Zechev, Toncho. *Bulgarskia Velikden* (Sofia: Anubis, 2000).

Zarev, Ivan. *History of the Evangelical Pentecostal Churches in Bulgaria (1920-1989)*
(Sofia: 1993).