

**THE TETRAEVANGHELION AND THE HOLY GOSPEL
IN ROMANIAN: ADJUSTING AND EXPLAINING SOME
SYNTAGMS**

Father Prof. Phd. Vasile Muntean

In the present paper, I will try to correct certain phrases and syntagms, as well as vocables, from the Romanian version of the Gospel, according to the Greek original version, obviously, but also in accordance with the nature of the Romanian language. The following corrections will be certainly useful when the Holy Gospel is republished in a Romanian version.

In the present communication, I shall make use of the Synodical version of the Bible¹, the New Testament exclusively, and the Holy Gospel². In the following lines, I shall endeavour to correct certain phrases, syntagms or vocables, so as to give an improved version of the sacred text.

In Matthew 1:2, instead of „Abraham begat Isaac”, we could accept the expression „Abraham begat Isaac (through his wife) etc.” I could notice that, in a New Testament issue (belonging to an unorthodox publishment), there is an interesting rephrasing of the type: „Isaac was born to Abraham...”. At the same place (Matthew 1:16, 19), in connection with the name of the God-fearful Joseph, there appears the attribute „husband”, whereas in the Romanian Bible approved by the Holy Synod, the translation favours the term „fiancé”; in this case, we are confronted with an interpretative translation (from an orthodox point of view)³.

Also, I can notice that the syntagm from some issues of the Bible: „(Joseph) had no intercourse with her until...”, was more recently substituted by Romanian scholars in theology with the words: „(Joseph) had no intercourse with her, (and) Mary had brought forth her first born Son...” (Mathew 1:25)⁴. This is, certainly, in the spirit orthodox way of thinking and mentality⁵; I personally consider that the respective interpretation is not abusive.

¹ *The Bible or the Holy Book*, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2008.

² *The Sacred and Godly Gospel* (see also: *The Gospel*), EIBMO, București, 2010.

³ *The Gideons International*, Ed. Shinil Ltd. (Korea), 1993, p. 5.

⁴ *The Bible*, p. 1098.

⁵ See also *The Gospel* (p. 322), as well as the comment of the late metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania, in *The New Testament*, 2nd edition, EIBMBOR, București, 1995, p. 4, note 5.

In the present-day, lay language, the syntagm, or more precisely, the vocable „the poor in spirit”, (Matthew 5:3) means „ignorant people”, „lacking knowledge”; we consider that it would be useful to rephrase this as „the humble ones”, according to the appreciation of Saint John Chrysostom⁶.

Again, in Matthew’s Gospel (6:11), the phrase ‘for being’ from the Lord’s Prayer, should be left out; it would be suggested to go back to the usual syntagm ‘our daily bread’, which represents more accurately the original Greek text⁷. Similarly, in Matthew’s Gospel 6:32, the word ‘the nations’ should be replaced with ‘the pagans’⁸. In a different chapter (8:14) ‘with fever’⁹ shall be lectured as ‘sick of high fever’¹⁰.

The highly controversial problem regarding ‘the brothers and the sisters of our Lord’ is seen somewhat sorted out in Matthew 13:55-56, where, in brackets, we can read ‘the male and female cousins’¹¹. Certainly, in this case we have reference to two stepbrothers of our Saviour, as specialists in this field of expertise have demonstrated¹².

According to the Greek original text in Matthew (15:22), we read: ‘...And, behold, a Canaanite woman from those parts, came to Him, crying out...’; this should be reread in this way: ‘... And, behold, a Canaanite woman came out of those borders and cried unto Him...’¹³.

In Matthew 16:25, we should definitely replace ‘soul/ losing your soul’ with ‘life’¹⁴ (‘if you give up your life for Me, you will find true life’); this will carry out the message more accurately.

⁶ *The Orthodox Faith*, Ed. Trinitas, Iași, 1996, p. 414 (with bibliographical guidance). See also the documented explanations of Th. D. Priest Ioan Mihoc, *A Study of the New Testament, vol. I: The Gospels accordind to Matthew and Mark*, Ed. Eftimie Murgu, Reșița, 2010, pp. 70-74.

⁷ Bartolomeu Anania, *op. cit.*, p. 11, note 1. See also E. Nestle - K. Aland, *Novum Testamentum graece et latine*, United Bibles Societies, London, 1969, p. 13; *Das Neue Testament, Le Nouveau Testament, The New Testament*, The Gideons International, 1987: ‘tägliches Brot’, ‘pain quotidien’, ‘daily bread’. Moreover, see Al. Elian, *The Faith Confession of the Orthodox Church – 1642* (translation), EIBMBOR, București, 1981, p. 119; *The Orthodox Faith (op. cit.)*, p. 258 (line 4 up downwards).

⁸ In the manner of the Metropolitan B. Anania, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁹ *The Bible*, p. 1105.

¹⁰ *The Gospel*, p. 74; p. 379.

¹¹ *The Bible*, p. 1114; *The Gospel*, p. 84.

¹² Ioan G. Savin, ‘Remarks and reconsiderations around the problem: Lord’s Brothers’, in *Theological Studies*, 5-6/1961, p. 271-296; Valeriu Drăgușin, ‘<Lord’s Brothers> in the light of the orthodox exegesis’, *Theological Studies*, 5-6/1985, p. 381-389; Dumitru Bondalici, *The Encyclopaedia of the great personalities in the Old & New Testament*, Ed. Diecezană, Caransebeș, 2005, p. 453-454, 458, 513.

¹³ Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum*, p. 40; *The Gospel*, p. 132; B. Anania, *op. cit.*, p. 29; Priest Th. D. Vasile Mihoc, *Sermons based on exegesis on Sundays throughout the year*, Ed. Teofania, Sibiu, 2001, p. 142.

¹⁴ This is the version of the ex-hierarch B. Anania, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Again, the term ‘insane’¹⁵ referring to the ten bridesmaids in the parable (Matthew 25:2), as it has been recently translated, does not supply the real meaning, that of ‘foolish’, ‘irresponsible’. The Greek word *morai* might more appropriately be translated as ‘unwise’, ‘dunces’.

In the Gospel according to Luke, in 1:39, it is erroneous to translate it as ‘mountain country’, as the reference is made to the Orini Citadel¹⁶ located at about 6 km from Jerusalem.

In Luke 2:32, the word ‘Apokalypsis’ was wrongly translated by ‘discovery’¹⁷. Even if, originally, the word means ‘revelation’, ‘realization’, for the sake of clarity, we would recommend ‘a light to reveal God to the heathen’, or ‘the Enlightenment of nations’; in the New Testament in German, French, English, this word has been interpreted as ‘Enlightenment’, ‘Illumination’.

It is noteworthy that the word ‘glory’ from ‘the *glory* of your people, Israel’ confronts us with a shade of meaning in Martin Luther’s German version: if we refer to Israel, we find ‘Preis’ (praise, appraisal), but in the end of the Prayer ‘Our Heavenly Father’, we find a different term, with a different meaning: *Herrlichkeit*, meaning *glory*, *magnificence*. Since we are not able to grant the same glory both to God and to the people, before the Israel people, in the Prayer of God-fearful Simeon, we could use the word ‘honor’.

Referring to Pilatus, in Luke 3:1¹⁸, we should say he was a prefect¹⁹, not a procurator. In chapter 16:2, 3²⁰, the word ‘economy’ is difficult to understand by the members of the Church; it could be substituted by ‘administration’ or ‘economat’, both existing in the present-day Romanian dictionaries²¹. At any rate, the ‘iconom’ (administrator), should be read ‘econom’.

Finally, we refer to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8; we should correct the phrase ‘Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord...’ by ‘Zacchaeus stood up there, addressing the Lord...’ – as the Greek verb *statheis* (from *istemi*) suggests²².

I personally consider that ‘soul’ belonging to Saint John Theologian (12:25) should be fully understood as ‘life’; therefore, we should read as follows: ‘Those who love their *life* in this world will lose it’²³.

¹⁵ See also *The Gospel*, p. 130, p. 309.

¹⁶ Details and bibliography in Ioan Mircea, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, EIBMBOR, București, 1984, p. 348-349. Also see *The Gospel*, p. 298.

¹⁷ See also *The Gospel*, p. 340-341. In the previous editions, the version was adequate to the original.

¹⁸ Compare with *The Gospel*, p. 322.

¹⁹ Jean-Pierre Lemonon, ‘Pilatus’ Inscription’, in *The Origins of Christianity* (Romanian translation), Ed. Polirom, Iași 2002, p. 187-189.

²⁰ *The Gospel*, p. 173.

²¹ For example, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary*, vol. II, Ed. Enciclopedică, București, 1996, *sub voce*.

²² A meaning that could be noticed by Metropolitan B. Anania as well, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

²³ *Ibidem*, with the necessary explanations.

The word ‘preaslăvire’ (12:23.28)²⁴ (engl. overpraise) does not even exist in Romanian dictionaries; instead, we find ‘proslăvire’ (engl. glorifying unto smb.) from the Slavonic word ‘proslaviti’. Instead, the word ‘preamărire’ is recommended (glorifying, giving high praise); unfortunately, ‘preamărire’ is seldom used.

From the title chapter 19, in the Gospel according to John, ‘The Passions of Our Lord’, we should actually understand the words ‘The Sufferings of Jesus Christ on the Cross’²⁵.

I therefore presented *supra* some syntagms and vocables from some new texts of the Gospel (the New Testament) which deserved special attention, with a view to satisfactorily improving the Romanian version of the Bible, including the Gospel.

²⁴ Cf. *The Gospel*, p. 46 and 302.

²⁵ In *The Gospel*, p. 263 *et alia*, we read as such.