

Mistranslations and Misinterpretations of Biblical Verses in English and Modern Greek Versions of the Holy Scriptures

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This paper is part of a project dealing with the mistranslations and misinterpretations that are found in English and Modern Greek versions of the Holy Scriptures in comparison with the prototype Greek text (New Testament) and the Greek text of the Old Testament (Septuagint).

In this paper only three examples (from the New Testament) will be given, representative of the numerous ones that exist in the examined English and Modern Greek translations.

The Original text, which was written in Greek, is compared with the most common English versions and the Modern Greek version produced by the Bible Society. Even though the different English versions state in their introduction that their translation was derived from the original languages, Hebrew and Greek,¹ a diligent student with a sound knowledge of Koine (Common) Greek, would strongly disagree with their suggestion of accuracy in translation because he/she would find numerous mistakes, which cause misinterpretation and therefore unavoidable alteration of the teaching of the Church. Such misinterpretations lead in some cases to

1 The Greek translation of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament is called "Septuagint" or LXX (from the Latin "Septuagint" = seventy). The translation was made about 285 years before the birth of Christ for the religious needs of thousands of Jews who lived in the "diaspora", and whose main tool of communication was the Koine (common) or Alexandrine version of Greek. It is called Septuagint because seventy Jewish translators (or rather seventy-two) took up the task of translation. For abbreviation purposes it is called "the translation of the seventy".

perverse teachings. Correct translation is paramount and essential, in order to be able to claim fidelity to the Truth. It should be noted that every translation has its own difficulties, some of which are acknowledged below:

Firstly, the Greek language is undoubtedly extremely precise because there is a word for almost everything, whereas in the English language, one word can have several meanings. This makes it difficult to give a precise translation of the actual Greek text.

Secondly, many Greek words in the Holy Scriptures have a meaning, which is very different in everyday Modern Greek vocabulary. Modern English translations attributing the Modern Greek meaning to the words result in misinterpretation.

Thirdly, the original translators of the books of the Bible (Septuagint) were Hebrews writing in Greek but thinking in Hebrew. Their Hebrew thinking was influencing their choice of Greek words. Many Greek words of the Bible are Greek in their form but Hebrew in their essence. Because of this the Holy Scripture has its own particular language. Therefore the translation of particular Greek words into English cannot occur through the exclusive use of a Greek–English Lexicon.

Further, one word with a specific meaning in a particular verse of a book might have a totally different meaning in another verse of another book. This necessitates a comparative study to determine the proper translation and interpretation of such words in their various contexts.

This work will deal only with the New Testament and it comes as a humble endeavour to offer a new insight to the task of translation so that the holy text is properly translated and understood.

The way of discovering the correct translation–interpretation is the following:

- a) Presentation of the examined original Greek text.
- b) Presentation of the examined text in the current English translations followed by the Modern Greek version produced by the Bible Society.

- c) Comparison of the texts with the original Greek as far as the correctness of translation is concerned. Where necessary, grammatical and syntactical analysis is given.
- d) An explanation as to why given translations—interpretations are not successful, for linguistic, syntactical, logical or scriptural reasons.
- e) Investigation of the main and correct meaning of the examined words in comparison with other verses of the Holy Scriptures, making use of the synonymic and antithetical parallelism of the Hebrew and Greek word.
- f) Presentation of the true meaning of the translated—interpreted verse word by word.

Our basic text is the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint), which is the oldest translation of the Old Testament, a text that the undivided Church used up to the 8th century AD and the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church has used for twenty centuries. This is the text that was referred to by the Apostles, the Fathers of the Church, the ecclesiastical writers and the local and Ecumenical Councils. This translation was used as a basis for all the other early translations. The received or Byzantine or ecclesiastical text will be used as a basis for the New Testament. It is the text that the Eastern Orthodox Christian Church has used from the beginning and guarantees its authenticity as the inspired word of God as it was received from the Apostles.

This work does not claim to be infallible. It is offered to those who love Jesus Christ and search with fear of God and piety the inexhaustible mind of the Divine Truth. The reader who has an opposite point of view, which can bear the weight of investigation, analysis, comparison, and Scriptural evidence, is invited to communicate with the author for further research, analysis and clarification.

The following English versions of the Bible will be used:

- a) King James Version (1611, KJV)
- b) New King James Version (1982, NKJV)

- c) Revised Standard Version (RSV). The RSV of the Bible is an authorised revision of the American Standard Version, published in 1901, which was a revision of the King James Version, published in 1611
- d) Good News Australia – New Testament (Revised Edition 1994) – By the Bible Society.

Additionally, the following Modern Greek version will be used:
ΑΓΙΑ ΓΡΑΦΗ – Modern Greek Translation (Bible Society 1997).

MATTHEW 1:19

Original Text

“Ἰωσήφ δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς δίκαιος² ὧν καὶ μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν παραδειγματίσαι, ἐβουλήθη λάθρα ἀπολῦσαι αὐτήν.”

King James Version

“Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.”

New King James Version

“And Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.”

Revised Standard Version

“And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.”

Good News Australia

“Joseph was a man who always did what was right, but he did not want to disgrace Mary publicly; so he made plans to break off the engagement privately.”

2 Δίκαιος, -αία, -ον: righteous, observing divine and human laws; one who is such as he ought to be; Mt. 1:19 (the meaning is, it was not consistent with his uprightness to expose his betrothed to public reproach).

Αγία Γραφή

“Ο μνηστήρας της ο Ιωσήφ, επειδή ήταν ευσεβής και δεν ήθελε να τη διαπομπεύσει, αποφάσισε να διαλύσει τον αρραβώνα, χωρίς επίσημη διαδικασία.” (Translated: “Joseph, her betrothed man, being a pious man and unwilling to disgrace her, decided to dissolve the engagement without a formal procedure”.)

The difficulty in translation in this verse is the word δίκαιος (*thikeos* – “just”).

In the above English and Modern Greek versions, the translators do not translate the word δίκαιος (“just”) and ευσεβής (“pious”) correctly for the following reasons. Firstly, if we give to that word the meaning of “being just” in the legalistic sense, that is to do the right thing according to the law, then Joseph ought to report the misconduct of his betrothed to the authorities. Secondly, the Modern Greek translation “pious” again is not correct because if Joseph was pious, having high respect for God and His Law surely he would not have gone against that and reproached his betrothed one! He would never displease God. Additionally, the word δίκαιος taken literally within the examined verse has no point of reference.

Through comparison with other biblical verses where the same word is used we can justify the translation here of δίκαιος as “merciful”, “compassionate”.

a) Ezra 9:15 (Septuagint:³ 2 Ezra 9:15).

“Κύριε Θεός Ἰσραὴλ δίκαιος σύ, ὅτι κατελείφθημεν διασφoζόμενοι ὡς ἡ ἡμέρα αὕτη” (Septuagint).

“O LORD God of Israel, thou art just, for we are left a remnant that has escaped, as at this day” (RSV).

Ezra the Priest invokes the *mercy* and *philanthropy* of God so that the Lord does not inflict punishments upon Israel because Israel transgressed

3 Ezra 9:15 is found in Septuagint as 2 Ezra: 9:15.

and disobeyed His commandments about mixed marriages, and in his prayer says to the Lord that “You are just, O Lord...” In verses 8 and 9 the mercy and compassion of God to the transgressor Israel is evident.

If we render the literal translation of the word “just”, God should punish Israel for its disobedience. We see that throughout the Old Testament when Israel disobeys and transgresses the commandments of God, punishment follows. When Israel repents and returns to the Lord, mercy and forgiveness comes upon the people. This is the justice of God in the Old Testament. Ezra knew that God is merciful and compassionate to those who repent and calls upon that attribute of God for the people of Israel. It is like saying to God: “O Lord, You are merciful and compassionate and You spared us until this day. And we are standing before You even though we are transgressors; this is only because of Your infinite mercy and compassion”. So God is δίκαιος that is, merciful and compassionate, because he did not destroy the sinful people but saved a portion of that people.

b) Psalm 112:4 (Septuagint: 111)

“Ἐλεήμων καὶ οἰκτίρων καὶ δίκαιος” (Septuagint).

“The LORD is gracious, merciful and righteous” (RSV).

The adjective δίκαιος (“righteous”) is used in the same semantic context as “gracious” and “merciful”. Although these words are different in form they convey similar meanings. This is more evident in verse 9, which reads:

“Ἐσκόρπισεν, ἔδωκε τοῖς πένησιν· ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα” (Septuagint).

“He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever” (RSV).

In this verse the word δικαιοσύνη “righteousness” has the meaning of “compassion” because the compassionate man gives freely to the poor.

The Modern Greek translation omits the second part of verse 9 (“his righteousness endures forever”).

c) Psalm 116:5 (Septuagint: 114–115:5)

“Ἐλεήμων ὁ Κύριος καὶ δίκαιος, καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἡμῶν ἐλεεῖ” (Septuagint).

“Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful” (RSV).

The words “gracious” that is, “philanthropic”, and “merciful” are synonymous to δίκαιος (“just”). The Lord is δίκαιος and thus He shows mercy to man. This Psalm is the prayer of thanks of a man who was saved from a multitude of dangers and expresses his love and gratefulness for the Lord who saved him.

d) Proverbs 10:2–3

“οὐκ ὠφελήσουσι θησαυροὶ ἀνόμους, δικαιοσύνη δὲ ρύσεται ἐκ θανάτου. Ὁ λιμοκτονήσει Κύριος ψυχὴν δικαίαν” (Septuagint).

“Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but the righteousness delivers from death. The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry...” (RSV).

In this verse “righteousness” means “mercifulness” as in Proverbs 11:4 as well: “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death”.

A righteous soul is the merciful soul, the merciful man. The meaning of these verses is that lawless treasures do not profit one at all. Instead, what profits a man and saves him from death is mercifulness, because the Lord never lets a merciful man go hungry. The Lord shows His mercy to a merciful man.

e) Zachariah 9:9

“Χαῖρε σφόδρα, θύγατερ Σιών· κήρυσσε, θύγατερ Ἱερουσαλήμ· ἰδοὺ ὁ βασιλεὺς σου ἔρχεται σοι, δίκαιος καὶ σώζων αὐτός, πραύς καὶ ἐπιβεβηκώς ἐπὶ ὑπόζυγιον καὶ πῶλον νέον” (Septuagint).

In this verse the difference between the King James and New King James Versions, and the Revised Standard Version is noteworthy:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey” (KJV & NKJV).

“Rejoice, greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your King comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass...” (RSV).

Here the words “just” and “having salvation” KJV & NKJV (δίκαιος και σώζων) are translated in the RSV as “triumphant and victorious”. The latter translation is completely incorrect not only from a literal perspective but from a rational one as well. The renderings “triumphant and victorious” are opposite in meaning to “humble” and “riding on an ass”. More correct are the renderings of KJV & NKJV. But those too, lack precision. The soundest rendering is “merciful”. The King saves because of his mercifulness and compassion, not his justice. Justice leads to punishment, not salvation.

Αγία Γραφή

“Χαίρε, πόλη της Σιών! Αλαλάξατε από χαρά, κάτοικοι⁴ της Ιερουσαλήμ! Νάτος, ο βασιλιάς σας, έρχεται. Είναι δίκαιος και σώζει. Είναι πράος και κάθεται πάνω σε γαϊδούρι, σ’ ένα πουλάρι, γέννημα υποζυγίου.”

Again the word δίκαιος is left without translation because is taken to have the legalistic meaning.

f) 1 John 1:9

“Εάν όμολογώμεν τας άμαρτίας ήμών, πιστός έστι και δίκαιος, ίνα άφή ήμίν τας άμαρτίας και καθάριση ήμάς από πάσης άδικίας” (Original text).

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (NKJV).

“Αν όμως, ομολογούμε τις αμαρτίες μας, ο Θεός, που είναι αξιόπιστος και δίκαιος, θα συγχωρήσει τις αμαρτίες μας και θα μας καθάρσει από κάθε άδικη πράξη” (Αγία Γραφή-Bible Society).

4 As above: instead of “daughter of Zion” it states: “inhabitants of Zion”.

Here again the Modern Greek text leaves the word δίκαιος without interpretation.

The translators presume that God is called “faithful” meaning that he keeps his promises to forgive the sins of men, and to the word δίκαιος they give the usual meaning. But both these words here have the meaning of “merciful” and “compassionate”. As such, God forgives our sins and cleanses us from all evil.

The word “unrighteousness” – άδικη πράξη – in the above verse is used as a synonym of the word “sin”. As the word “righteousness” – δικαιοσύνη – often means good, holiness, virtue, in the same way the opposite “unrighteousness” – αδικία – means evil, sin, impiety. “God is merciful and compassionate to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from every evil.”

g) 1 John 2:1

“Τεκνία μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μή ἀμάρτητε καί ἐάν τις ἀμάρτη, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τόν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν δίκαιον” (Original Text).

“My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (NKJV).

Αγία Γραφή

“Παιδιά μου, αυτά σας γράφω για να σας προτρέψω να μην αμαρτάνετε. Αν όμως κάποιος αμαρτήσει, έχουμε συνήγορο κοντά στον Πατέρα, τον δίκαιο Ιησού Χριστό.”

Here the word δίκαιος is left without translation.

In this verse the word δίκαιος “righteous” does not have the meaning “holy”, used of Jesus as the advocate who boldly speaks on our behalf to God the Father, but it has the same meaning as in the verses already examined, that is, “merciful” and “compassionate”. The Apostle John wants to say that Jesus as merciful and compassionate is our fervent advocate before the Father. Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God the Father and us. The capacity of mercifulness and compassion

characterises the Mediator rather than His justice for the forgiveness of our sins. The above notion is supported by the following scriptural references:

(i) Hebrews 2:16–18

“For indeed he does not give aid to angels, but he does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Therefore, in all things he had to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to aid those who are tempted” (NKJV).

(ii) Hebrews 4:15–16

“For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (NKJV).

(iii) Rom. 8:34

“...It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us” (NKJV).

It is noteworthy to point out that the Apostle underlines the mercifulness of God because he does not say that we have an “advocate with God” but an “advocate with the Father”. The expression “the Father” is not said in relation to Christ but to us men. He is not referring to God the Father exclusively, that is the first person of the Holy Trinity, but to God in general. Since God is the Father of all, he is compassionate and merciful towards us. It is as if the Apostle is saying to us “If any one of you falls into sin let him not despair because our advocate with God is merciful and compassionate. And God is an affectionate and merciful Father”.

Now let us give the proper translation of the examined verse MATTHEW 1:19:

“Then Joseph her husband, being a compassionate man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.”

MATTHEW 1:24–25

Original Text

“Διεγερθείς δέ ὁ Ἰωσήφ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου ἐποίησεν ὡς προσέταξεν αὐτῷ ὁ ἄγγελος Κυρίου καὶ παρέλαβε τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, καὶ οὐκ ἐγίνωσκεν αὐτὴν ἕως οὔ ἔτεκε τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον, καὶ ἐκάλεσε τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦν.”

King James Version

“Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.”

New King James Version

“Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn son. And he called his name JESUS.”

Revised Standard Version

“When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.”

Good News Australia

“So when Joseph woke up, he married Mary, as the angel of the Lord had told him to. But he had no sexual relations with her before she gave birth to her son. And Joseph named him Jesus.”

Αγία Γραφή

“Ὅταν ξύπνησε ὁ Ἰωσήφ, ἔκανε ὅπως τὸν πρόσταξε ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ πήρε στο σπίτι τὴ Μαρία τὴ γυναῖκα του. Καὶ δὲν εἶχε συζυγικὲς σχέσεις μαζί της ὡσότου γέννησε τὸ γιο της τὸν πρωτότοκο καὶ του ἔδωσε τὸ ὄνομα Ἰησοῦς.”

Firstly, note the inconsistencies of the above English versions as regards

the words “till”, “until”, “before” and “firstborn”. The RSV and the Good News Australia do not use “firstborn” but simply “son”. The original has “firstborn”.

The examined words here will be “till” or “until”, “before” and “firstborn”. The translators of the above and of other versions fail to translate accurately these words. The phrase “... knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son” not being translated correctly implies that after Mary gave birth to Jesus, Joseph had relations with her and she had other children who are known as the “brothers” of Jesus. This is not the case though. Additionally, the word “firstborn” not translated and interpreted correctly implies that there are other children after the first one. The meaning of these words is quite different to those given today among the Protestant denominations. The expression “ἕως οὖν” denotes the continued, the unchanged, the unaltered, and the immutable. It also means “never” according to other Scriptural quotations that will be given below. The Evangelist Matthew does not intend to show who Mary is but who Jesus is. He does not seek to say that Mary ceased to be a virgin after the birth of Jesus, but he wants to say that Jesus was the fruit of perfect purity, because Joseph did not have sexual relations with Mary. Matthew speaks about Christ and defines His virginal birth. Joseph is not the father of Christ and did not have any part in His conception. Matthew does not speak about the events concerning the life of Mary after the birth of Jesus, that is, whether she had other children with Joseph or not, but seeks to indicate who Jesus is (Luke 1:34–35). The meaning “never” of the expression “ἕως οὖν” is apparent in the following Bible quotations and points out the eternal virginity of Mary.

a) Gen. 8:7

“Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth” (NKJV).

Of course the raven never returned to the ark even though the waters had dried up. Then Noah sent a dove.

b) 2 Samuel 6:23

“Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death” (NKJV).

It would be very entertaining to even suggest that Michal had children after her death!

c) Psalm 110:1 (109:1 Septuagint)

“The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool” (NKJV).

Does this mean that the Lord (Christ) will cease to sit at the right hand of His Father (LORD) after his enemies are subjected to him! Certainly not! Here the expression “eos” denotes the unchanged, the unaltered, the continued, and the immutable. The same meaning applies to Matthew 22:44 (same reference made by Christ).

d) Psalm 123:2 (122:2 Septuagint)

“Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until he has mercy on us” (NKJV).

Will the eyes of the servants stop looking to the LORD after the LORD shows His mercy on them? Certainly not! Their eyes will always be looking to the LORD. Here again the expression “until” denotes the unchanged, the unaltered, the continued, the immutable.

e) Matthew 28:20

“...And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (NKJV).

Would the expression “even to” mean that after the end of the age Christ will cease to be with his disciples? Certainly not! He is always with His disciples.

John 9:18

“But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind

and received his sight, until they called the parents of him who had received his sight” (NKJV).

Did the Jews believe after they called the blind man’s parents? No! They never believed. Here the expression “until” means never.

To this point we see that the words “until”, “till”, “to” denote the unchanged, the continued, the unaltered, the immutable or never.

With this notion we use the above-examined words today. Let us give a plain example:

The teacher says to his students: “Be quiet until I return”. Would that expression mean that when the teacher returns the students can be noisy in the class? Certainly not!

The examined verse is translated thus:

“And he never knew her not even after she had brought forth her firstborn son. And he called his name Jesus”.

This translation results in the teaching of the Church that Mary is ever virgin.

Another Biblical quotation gives support to this conclusion:

Ezekiel 44:1–3

“Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary which faces towards the east, but it was shut. And the LORD said to me, ‘This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter by it, because the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut’. As for the prince, because he is the prince, he may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way” (NKJV).

The eastern gate of the sanctuary is the virginal womb of Mary. Ezekiel speaks prophetically of the eternal virginity of Mary.

The correct translation and thus interpretation of the word “firstborn” supports even more the above concept of the eternal virginity of Mary.

From the phrase “firstborn” Protestant denominations imply that after

Mary gave birth to Christ she had a second born and many other children with Joseph, as it is recorded in Luke 8:19, Matthew 13:55–56, Mark 6:3 where Jesus is called brother of James, Joses, Simon, Judas, and of some sisters. The reality is not at all like this though. Firstly, the word “brother” “ἀδελφός” – *adelfos* – is an attempt to translate an unknown Aramaic word and no one has any idea what the actual word was which is rendered in Greek as “brother”. This expression is used in the Holy Scriptures in a broad sense. It can denote the brother, the cousin or the nephew. In Genesis 14:16 Abraham calls Lot “brother” even though Lot was his nephew. Secondly, the correct meaning of the word firstborn is “he who opens his mother’s womb first”, regardless of whether there are other children after or not. Even though there are not other children after the first, that first one is called firstborn because the firstborn was the privileged one. The word firstborn means also “the elect”, “the chosen one” (Exodus 4:22: “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: Israel is my son, my firstborn’”).

Christ is called firstborn son not only of Mary but of God as well (Colossians 1:15: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” and Hebrews 1:6: “But when he again brings the firstborn into the world, he says...”).

Does that mean that God has a second born son? Incomprehensible! Why? Because Christ is the “only begotten son” – “μονογενής” – (John 1:14, 18): “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth”, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared Him”. Also, John 3:16, 18: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life”, “He who believes in him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” and 1 John 4:9: “In this the love of God was manifested towards us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (NKJV). Thus

the word “firstborn” does not necessarily mean that another child follows. The firstborn son of Mary is her only one. It is very interesting to read how Luke refers to Mary in 2:5: “And Joseph...to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child”. The period of betrothal ended on the day of marriage when the husband took his wife into his house. Here, although Joseph had taken Mary to his house (Matthew 1:20, 24) Mary is still called “betrothed”. This means that even after Joseph and Mary were living together, Mary was still betrothed and not a wife. She was always “betrothed” and never “wife”. Before the birth of Christ the Gospels call Joseph husband – ἄνδρα – of Mary even though there was no marital relation between them. After the birth of Christ, Joseph is never called husband of Mary but Mary is always called the “mother of the child”. Since there was never a marital relation during the time that Joseph is called “husband” of Mary, could they have had such a relation when they were never called “husband and wife”?

LUKE 11:27–28

Original Text

v.27 “Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ λέγειν αὐτόν ταῦτα ἐπάρασά τις γυνή φωνήν ἐκ τοῦ ὄχλου εἶπεν αὐτῷ· μακαρία ἡ κοιλία ἡ βαστάσασά σε καὶ μαστοὶ οὓς ἐθήλασας. v.28 Αὐτός δέ εἶπε· μενοῦνγε μακάριοι οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ φυλάσσοντες αὐτόν.”

The difficulty for the translators is the second part of the examined verses, that is, verse 28 and more precisely the word “μενοῦνγε” (Composite word: men+oun+ye meaning in English “of course, indeed, certainly, yes”).⁵

The meaning of these verses is: As Christ was speaking, a woman suddenly got up and filled with enthusiasm and awe cried out: “Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that you sucked!” With these words she expressed her admiration for Christ and at the same time for His mother.

5 Μικρὸ Λεξικὸ τῆς Αρχαίας Ἑλληνικῆς, 1996:223.

Christ's response literally to that woman was "Of course (yes, indeed, certainly), blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it". Why did Christ answer like that? Because He verified the statement of that woman. He did this because He Himself had chosen His mother as the cleanest, the purest vessel on earth, which He would use for His divine dwelling. For nine months He was in her womb and then allowed Himself to be under her care until He reached adulthood. The word "of course" verifies her supremacy above all others on earth. How could He deny this?

Before we proceed to the theological consideration of the words (blessed is the womb...) we feel that we should present the examined English translations so that the antithesis of the meaning of the words becomes obvious.

King James Version

"But He said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."

New King James Version

"But He said, 'More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"

Revised Standard Version

"But he said, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'"

Good News Australia

"But Jesus answered, 'Rather, how happy are those who hear the word of God and obey it!'"

Αγία Γραφή

"Πιο πολύ χαρά σ' εκείνους που ασκούν το λόγο του Θεού και τον εφαρμόζουν." (Translated: More than that happy are those who hear the word of God and observe it.)

The understanding from the above English and Modern Greek texts, without knowing what the original text states, is that Christ does not agree

with the woman's statement. He seems to be correcting her, saying that more blessed than His mother are those who hear the word of God and keep it. This notion is on the one hand the result of a wrong translation and on the other hand totally anti-scriptural. It shows ignorance of the meaning of the word "μενοῦνγε"⁶ and disregard of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures regarding Mary, especially when she is the first to hear the word of God and keep it more faithfully and with more obedience than any other human being (Psalm 45 [44 Septuagint]: 9b–11, 17, Luke 1:26–38, 41–45, 48–49, 2:51). In Psalm 45, the verses 9–17 are regarded by the Church as referring to the Virgin Mary, the Queen (v.9b), as a personification of the Church (virgins, v. 14), the Bride of the Messiah. Even though the NKJV capitalises "Your" in v.17 ("I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the people shall praise you forever and ever") as referring to God, the Church historically has seen this verse as applying to Mary, as echoed in the Magnificat: "All generations will call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Psalm 45 is a magnificent psalm, where David illumined by the Holy Spirit gives the notion of Christ the Messiah as the King and Bridegroom with His Queen and Bride. King David entangles the notions of Christ as Messiah, His Church as Queen and Bride while at the same time the notion of the Church identifies with the Queen as being Mary His mother. This magnificent Psalm along with the witnessing of the Archangel Gabriel to Mary concerning the Son of God and Elizabeth's words to Mary in Luke 1:39–45 testify beyond any doubt who and what Mary was. How could Christ renounce her, whom He highly favoured among all women? David in verse 10–11 of the above psalm sees in a vision the blessed moment of the Annunciation of the Holy Theotokos. Since her response to the Archangel Gabriel is of tremendous importance for the salvation of the whole human race, he urges his distant descendant (Mary)

6 Two recent translations (The New English Bible by the Bible Societies in association with Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press Eighth Impression 1976) and the Interlinear Hebrew Greek English Bible by Jay Green, 1981) translate the Greek word "menounye" as "no" indicating ignorance or an inexplicably deliberate choice of an inappropriate translation.

whom he calls “daughter” to pay extreme attention (“listen, O daughter, Consider and incline your ear; forget your own people also, and your father’s house; So the King will greatly desire your beauty”) to the proposal of God to become His Mother, serving thus the mystery of incarnation. In other words, he urges her to be obedient to God because all men and all women of all times depend on her positive and obedient response so that the Son of God is born and the first prophesy of the Holy Scriptures is fulfilled (“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall crush your head and you shall bruise his heel” Gen. 3:15). Indeed, the chosen daughter of Nazareth paid attention to the call of God and forgot everything else – “forget your own people also, and your father’s house” – and the only thing she cared for was how to please the Lord. As a result of this “the King greatly desired her beauty”. What beauty? The inner spiritual beauty, which consisted of purity of flesh and spirit in a degree that surpassed all other humans, and total obedience and submission to the will of God. How could Christ renounce all these wonders that He gave to His Mother? And who could surpass His Mother in hearing the word of God and keeping it? Nobody, of course!

Therefore, the response of Christ to the exaltation of Him and His Mother by the woman takes the proper meaning not only by the correct translation of the word “μενοῦνγε” but through a comparative study of relevant Scriptural verses.

Another mistranslation in verse 28 is the expression “But he said”. This comes as a result of the mistranslation of the word “μενοῦνγε”. The scriptural expression “Ὁ δὲ εἶπεν” does not have an antithetical meaning but affirmative and emphatic to the meaning of verse 27 and should be translated as “and he said”.

We translate the examined verse:

v. 27 “And it happened, as he spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to him, ‘Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts which nursed you!’ v.28 And he said, ‘Certainly, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!’”

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