

The Greek Modality Adverb ἵσως in the First Old Church Slavonic Translation of Gregory of Nazianzus' Homily 38

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Abstract: This paper provides novel, relevant data to study the translation technique of the First Old Church Slavonic Version of Gregory of Nazianzus' Homily 38 "On the Theophany" (Εἰς τὰ Θεοφάνια, CPG 3010.38; BHG, 1921-1921b; PG 36, 312A-333A). This work was rendered from Greek into Old Church Slavonic by an anonymous Bulgarian translator, presumably between the late 9th and the early 10th century. The text is transmitted by two testimonies, one of East Slavic (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Q.π.I.16, late 11th century), the other of South Slavic origin (Sofia, SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, № 674, mid-14th century). The translation's archaic morphological and lexical features reveal a marked analogy with the language of the Old Bulgarian Ecclesiastical Writer, Constantine, Bishop of Preslav. By investigating hitherto unexplored aspects of the translation technique the author offers further compelling evidence of a connection between Homily 38 and Constantine's *Didactic Gospel*. The focus is on a very peculiar rendering of the Greek modality adverb ἵσως ("possibly, perhaps"), which is translated by means of the verb "МЪНѢТИ" ("to mean", "to think", "to assume", "to consider"), conjugated in the first-person singular present indicative.

Keywords: Old Church Slavonic, Translations, Manuscripts, Greek Patristics, Gregory of Nazianzus, Constantine of Preslav, translation techniques, modality adverbs

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The Homily 38 “On the Theophany” (Εἰς τὰ Θεοφάνια, CPG 3010.38; BHG, 1921-1921b; PG 36, 312A-333A), composed between 379-381 CE by Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 329–390 CE), one of the greatest theologians of Eastern Christianity, was first rendered from Greek¹ into Old Church Slavonic (hereafter OCS) by an anonymous Bulgarian author presumably between the late 9th and the early 10th century (hereafter Or38~OCS-1). This translation has scant manuscript evidence, given that it is transmitted by only two testimonies². The first is an 11th-century Old East Slavic copy, preserving a collection of 13 Homilies (St Petersburg, Russian National Library, Q.п.І.16, ff. 147–162, hereafter – P³), while the second is a 14th-century Middle Bulgarian codex (Sofia, SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, № 674, hereafter – N), containing the so-called *Liturgical collection of the 16 Homilies*⁴.

Significant progress has been achieved in the investigation of Or38~OCS-1 with the completion of a number of lexicological studies (Kul’bakin 1940: 29–30⁵; Spasova 1999: 238–241⁶; Slavova 2021a:132–133), the publication of its first critical edition

¹ The Greek manuscript tradition of Homily 38 is overabundant and boasts more than 700 witnesses dating from between the 9th and late 18th centuries (see: <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/recherche-generale/results/page>). An edition of the Greek text based on twenty witnesses from the 9th–11th centuries was published by Moreschini in 1990 (SC: 104–149).

² A second OCS version was completed shortly thereafter by another anonymous Old Bulgarian translator. Unlike Or38~OCS-1 it survives in a large number of manuscripts (of East Slavic origin), dating from the late 14th up to the late 17th centuries, containing Gregory of Nazianzus’ *Liturgical collection of the 16 Homilies*, flanked by the Commentaries of the Byzantine exegete Nicetas of Heraclea (late 11th–early 12th century). For an overview of the textual transmission and a description of the codices see: Bruni 2010:121–122, n. 12; Bruni 2021:15–16.

³ P represents the only surviving example of a Slavonic collection of 13 Homilies. Because of its exceptional linguistic, paleographic, structural, and textual characteristics, P may be defined as a *codex unicus*. For further details regarding its dating, description, content, and textual features see: Bruni 2004: 27–86.

⁴ N also constitutes a witness of great textual significance. In the vast tradition of the Slavonic *Liturgical collection of the 16 Homilies*, which consists of more than 151 East and South Slavic codices, it is the only surviving testimony, written in South Slavic orthography, that transmits both Old Bulgarian (type *Slav.1*) and Middle Bulgarian (type *Slav.2*) translations (Bruni 2021: 25). For a facsimile edition see: Spasova 2014.

⁵ Kul’bakin first noted the occurrence of some morphological and lexical archaisms, such as the third person dual of the imperfect *ношаашете* (ἔφερον), the sigmatic aorist *начасъ* (ἠρξάμην), the verbal forms (3rd person aorist singular) *оумрѣвъ* (ἀπέθανε), *приаѣтъ* (ἔπαθεν) and *взъзѣтъ* (ἀνέλαβεν), the indefinite pronoun *ѣтеръ* (τις), the graecisms *иерен* (ιερεύς), *иудѣи* (Ιουδαῖος), *лентни* (λέντιον). This list can be supplemented by two further graecisms – *леръ* (ἄηρ) and *акровѣствина* (ἀκροβυστία) – as well as by the dual form of the present *стоитѣ* (εἰστήκεισαν).

⁶ Spasova noted the occurrence in Or38~OCS-1 of rare Greek-OCS equivalents such as *гражданинъ* (ἀστικός), *исходатанинъ* (πρόξενος), *клеветъникъ* (κατήγορος), *оучитель* (μυσταγωγός) and *оученикъ* (μύστης), as well as of *hapha legomena*, such as *пиръникъ* (ἑστιάτωρ) and *навадъникъ* (συκοφάντης).

(Bruni 2010: 270–285)⁷ – replacing the text's previous diplomatic transcription (Budilović 1875: 110–121) – the identification of the textual allegiances with specific groups of Greek manuscripts (Bruni 2004: 69, 73–75), and also research into the problem of the tradition's alleged Glagolitic substratum (Bruni 2023). Furthermore, according to a hypothesis first formulated by Spasova (Spasova 1999: 246) and recently reiterated by Slavova (Slavova 2021a: 135), the anonymous author of Or38~OCS-1 should be identified as Constantine, Bishop of Preslav, a pupil of Methodius, and one of the most prominent Old Bulgarian ecclesiastical writers of the late 9th–early 10th centuries. This compelling hypothesis is, however, based on insufficient evidence, and, therefore, awaits to be supplemented by further investigation.

The attribution to Constantine is substantiated by the discovery of a few grammatical and lexical similarities between the Or38~OCS-1 and his major works, namely the *Didactic Gospel*⁸ and his translation of the *Second Discourse against the Arians* (CPG 2093) by Athanasius of Alexandria (ca. 296/298–373 CE)⁹. On the one hand, special attention has been paid to the occurrence in Or38~OCS-1 of the infinitive **вѣигоу** in place of the standard form **вѣи** (“to be”), an archaism first reported by Vostokov (Востоков 1858: 34) and Miklošič (Miklosich 1876: 72). In the Or38~OCS-1 it occurs twice after the verb **мѣнѣи** (“to mean”, “to believe”, “to assume”) and once after **глаголати** (“to talk”, “to say”, “to tell”): 1) VII, 20: **лице кѣто мѣнѣи прѣста вѣигоу естъства** (κᾶν τις οἴηται τῷ ἀπλῆς εἶναι φύσεως); 2) XV, 4: **посѣлание вѣигоу мѣни** (ἀποστολὴν εἶναι νόμισον); 3) XV, 6: **понеже и прѣданъ вѣигоу глѣеть са** (Ἐπεὶ καὶ παραδεδοῦσθαι λέγεται)¹⁰. The form **вѣигоу** was shown to have several attestations in the *Didactic Gospel*, and one occurrence in the *Second Discourse against the Arians*¹¹. On the other

⁷ This edition reconstructs the Old Cyrillic archetype of Or38~OCS-1 on the basis of P and N. These testimonies are quite different from each other because of their orthography (respectively Old East Slavic and Middle Bulgarian), as well as for their distinctive transmission features. In P the text has a two-column layout and is not divided into chapters, but segmented into short paragraphs, very often consisting of a single sentence. Besides the colon, the punctuation marks include the following signs: **-**, **—**, **✧**, and **✧**. Furthermore, P displays the use of the marginal sign “heliakon”, which is borrowed from Greek manuscripts (ff. 148v, 151: Bruni 2004: 52–53). Conversely, N shows a single-column layout and a subdivision into 27 chapters, the beginning of which is marked by an initial, while the end by the combination of a colon and **—**. Moreover, N presents a series of corrections made by a later hand erasing several original readings of Or38~OCS-1, which are overwritten with variants taken from the second translation *Slav.2* (Bruni 2010: 272). As already noted by Conev (Conev 1923:198), the orthography adopted by the revisor (late 14th or 15th century?) is Old Serbian (see also: Spasova 2014: 6–7).

⁸ Edition: Tichova 2012.

⁹ Edition: Penkova 2015.

¹⁰ Edition: Bruni 2010: 301, 309.

¹¹ In the *Didactic Gospel* this form is to be found after such verbs as **мѣнѣи [са]**, **излагати**, **прѣпѣрѣти**, while in the *Second Discourse against the Arians* it is found after the verb **показати** (see: Slavova 2006; Slavova 2019; Moldovan 2021).

hand, a number of OCS terms appear only to be attested in the Or38~OCS-1 and the *Didactic Gospel*. They are: *пирьникъ* (ἔστιάτωρ), *пръвѣци* (πρῶτον), *родоуѣтєнїє* (γενεθλιαλογία), *родоуѣсти [сѧ]* (γενεαλογέω) – the latter used instead of the more frequent forms *родословити*, *причитати* *родомъ* (Славова 2021: 132–133).

This paper provides novel, relevant data to tackle the study of Or38~OCS-1’s translation technique. The study shows the existence of further analogies with Constantine’s *Didactic Gospel*. The focus is on the Greek modality adverb ἵσως (“possibly, perhaps”), whose OCS rendering, far from representing the result of a slavishly literal approach to the model, demonstrates a clear aptitude by the translator to interpret the text to replicate the semantic nuances of the original. This previously ignored textual data is particularly useful to address the complex problem of establishing the authorship of the work.

The striking feature consists in the fact that the anonymous translator does not render ἵσως with a corresponding OCS adverb, but instead, quite unexpectedly, with the verb *мнѣти* (“to mean”, “to think”, “to assume”, “to consider”), conjugated in the first-person singular (*Table 1*). In doing so he emphasizes the subjective element of modality.

Table 1

Homily 38, Chapt. 12	
Greek	<p>Τούτον ἔθετο μὲν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ... φυτῶν ἀθανάτων γεωργόν, θείων ἐννοιῶν ἴσως, τῶν τε ἀπλουστέρων καὶ τῶν τελεωτέρων.</p> <p><i>He placed him in heaven...to till immortal plants, possibly the Divine conceptions, the simplest and the most perfect.</i></p>
OCS	<p>се҃го же вѣведе вѣ раи...сааѣъ бесѣмрътнѣъ дѣлателѣа· мнѣиѣ бѣжи помѣшиленїи· прѣстѣиѣъ же и сѣврѣшенѣъ.¹²</p> <p><i>He placed him in heaven...to till immortal plants, as I assume the Divine conceptions, the simplest and the most perfect.</i></p>

A similar approach is to be found in the OCS translation of Gregory’s Homily 2 *In Defence of His Flight to Pontus* (Ἀπολογητικὸς τῆς εἰς τὸν Πόντον φυγῆς ἕνεκεν, CPG 3010.2) also known as *On the Priesthood* (Περὶ ἱερωσύνης)¹³, in which the

¹² Edition: Bruni 2010: 278.

¹³ This Homily is known to exist in OCS in one translation only, which dates from the end of the 9th – early 10th century (see: Bruni 2022).

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verb МЪНѢТИ translates both ἵσως and its synonym τάχα (“probably, perhaps”), as respectively shown in *Tables 2, 3 and 4.*

Table 2

Homily 2, Chapt. 17	
Greek	τάχα μὲν καὶ δι' ἄλλας αἰτίας ...probably due to other reasons...
OCS	МЪННѢ ИНѢХЪ Д'ВЛІА ВИНЪ ...I assume for other reasons...

Table 3

Homily 2, Chapt. 5	
Greek	Οὐ μὴν οὐδ', ὅπερ ἂν ὑπολάβοι τις ἵσως τῶν πάντα ἀτόπων καὶ μοχθηρῶν, οἱ κρίνουσι τὰ τῶν ἄλλων τοῖς οικείοις πάθεσιν, ἠσχύνθην τοῦ βαθμοῦ τὴν τάξιν ἐπιθυμία τῆς μείζονος· <i>Nor again, as some might believe, perhaps of those completely foolish and miserable, who judge others' feelings by their own, was I ashamed of the grade of my rank because of the desire for a higher one.</i>
OCS	Δ НЕ ІЕЖЕ ДІЦЕ КЪТО ВЪЗМЪННІТЪ· СЪННѢДЪ МЪННѢ БЕЗАКОННЪНІХЪ· Т'АЖЫКЪНІХЪ· НІЖЕ РАСПЪЖДАЮТЪ ИНѢХЪ СВОИМИ СЪРАСЪТЪМИ· ПОСРАМАНѢХЪ СЯ СЪТЕПЕНЪНІЗІМЪ ҃НІНЪМЪ· ПОМЪШЛІЕННІМЪ БОЛЬШАДГО.* ¹⁴ <i>Nor again, as some might believe, I mean of those completely foolish, miserable, who judge others by their own feelings, was I ashamed of the level of my rank because of the desire for a higher one.</i>

Table 4

Homily 2, Chapt.102	
Greek	Ἔχετε τὴν ἀπολογίαν τὴν ὑπὲρ τῆς φυγῆς, καὶ ἵσως οὐ μετρίαν. Ἄ μὲν οὖν με ἀφ' ὑμῶν ἀπήγαγεν, ὃ φίλοι καὶ ἀδελφοί, λυπηρῶς μὲν ἐμοὶ καὶ ὑμῖν ἵσως... <i>Here is the justification for my escape, and perhaps not proportionate. And what took me away from you, oh, my friends and brothers, painfully for me and perhaps for you...</i>

¹⁴ ПОСРАМАНѢХЪ СЯ results from an emendation. Manuscript P erroneously reads ПОСРАМЛІАВЪШЕ СЯ (fol. 167).

OCS	<p>ИМАТЕ ОΥΖΒΕΤΥΖ БЪЖАННА ДЪЛА И МЪНІѢ НЕ ХΟΥДЪ·ІЕЖЕ МА ОΥΖ ΒΑΣΖ ΟΥΖΒΕΔΕ· Ω ΔΡΟΥΖΙ Η ΒΡΑΤΗΙΑ· ΠΕΥΔΑΛΗΟ ΟΥΒΟ ΜΖΗΤΕ ΜЪНІѢ Η ΖΩΑΜΖ.¹⁵</p> <p><i>Here is the justification for my escape, and I believe it may not be proportionate. And what took me away from you, oh, my friends and brothers, painfully for me and I believe also for you...</i></p>
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In another passage of Or38~OCS-1, the OCS verb “МЪНІѢТИ” (“to mean”, “to think”, “to assume”, “to consider”) is used to translate the Greek υπολαμβάνω (“to assume”, “to suppose”, “to believe”) which appears in the form of the verbal adjective υποληπτέον. This impersonal form in the original text is transformed by the Old Bulgarian translator into a personal construction with the verb conjugated in the first-person singular of the present, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Homily 38, Chapt.9	
Greek	<p>Καὶ οὕτως ὑπέστησαν λαμπρότητες δεύτεραι, λειτουργοὶ τῆς πρώτης λαμπρότητος, εἴτε νοερὰ πνεύματα εἴτε πῦρ οἷον αἶλον καὶ ἀσώματων εἴτε τινὰ φύσιν ἄλλην, ἐγγυτάτω τῶν εἰρημένων, ταύτας ὑποληπτέον.</p> <p><i>And so, the secondary splendours were created, as the ministers of the primary splendour, whether they should be considered as intelligible spirits or as an immaterial and incorporeal fire or as some other nature, as close as possible to what was said.</i></p>
OCS	<p>И ТАКО СЪТВОРЕНЗИ БЪША: СВЕЪТЪЛОСТИ ВЪТОРЪΙΑ: СЛОУЖИТЕЛІА ПРЪВЪБИ СВЕЪТЪЛОСТИ: ЛИ ОУМЪННИ ДΟΥСИ: ЛИ ОГНЬ· ІАКОЖЕ БЕЗВЕЩЪСТЪВЪНЪ: И ВЕСПАЗЪТЪНЪ· ЛИ ЕТЕРО ЕСТЬСТВО ИНО БЛИЖЪНЕ СЪЩЕ РЕЧЕНЪІХЪ СИ МЪНЮ.¹⁶</p> <p><i>And so, the secondary splendours were created, as the ministers of the primary splendour, whether I consider them as intelligible spirits or as an immaterial and incorporeal fire or as some other nature, that is as close as possible to what was said.</i></p>

A very similar translation technique to the one illustrated in the examples above can also be found in Constantine’s *Didactic Gospel*. In one passage, the verb МЪНІѢТИ (“to mean”, “to think”, “to assume”, “to consider”) translates the Greek adverb ἴσως (Table 6), while in the other the verb υπολαμβάνω (Table 7)¹⁷.

¹⁵ ВЪМЪЗ results from an emendation. Manuscript P erroneously reads ИМЪМЪЗ (fol. 223r).

¹⁶ Edition: Bruni 2010: 276.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Dobriela Kotova for drawing my attention to these passages in the *Didactic Gospel* and for providing me with the references from the database of the project *The Vocabulary of Constantine of Preslav’s Uchitel’ noe evangelie* (*‘Didactic Gospel’*): *Old Bulgarian-Greek and Greek-Old Bulgarian Word Indices* (<https://uchitelnoevangelie.eu/>).

Table 6

<i>Didactic Gospel (4/15d11–16a05)</i>	
Greek	οὐ κατηράσατο αὐτοῦ τὴν ἡμέραν, ἀλλὰ πρῶως ἀποκρίνεται, καίτοι γε μὴ εἰδὼς τίς ποτε ἦν ὁ ἐρωτῶν, οὐδ' ὅτι θεραπεύειν ἐμελλεν, ἀλλ' ἢ τοῦτο μόνον ἵσως προσεδόκησε τὸ χρησιμεύειν αὐτῷ τὸν Χριστὸν τὸ ἐμβαλεῖν εἰς τὸ ὕδωρ. ¹⁸ <i>He did not curse his day, but answered gently, although he did not know who the questioner was, nor that he was going to heal him, but perhaps he only expected this, that it would be useful for him to be thrown into the water by Christ.</i>
OCS	НЕ ПРОКЛА СВОЕГО ДЪНЕ· НЪ И ПРИ(ЖАТЬНО) ОТЪВѢЩАЕТЕ НЕ ЗНАЯ ЖЕ КТО КЕСТЬ ВЪПРАШАИИ НИ ІАКО ХОЩЕТЕ ЖЕ ЦѢЛИТИ И· НЪ СЕГО ТЪКМА МЫНѢ УДАШЕ· ІАКО НА ПОТРѢБОУ КЕМОУ БЖДЕТЬ ХЪ· ВЪЛОЖИТИ И ВЪ ВОДОУ· <i>He did not curse his day, but answered gently, despite not knowing who the questioner was, nor that he was going to heal him, but I think he only expected this, that it would be useful for him to be thrown into the water by Christ.</i>

Table 7

<i>Didactic Gospel (1/5a12–15)</i>	
Greek	Λόγον δὲ αὐτὸν ἐκάλεσεν, ἵνα μὴ παθητὴν αὐτοῦ τὴν γέννησιν ὑπολάβωμεν. ¹⁹ <i>He called him the Word so that we should not think his birth is subject to suffering.</i>
OCS	СЛОВА ЖЕ ЕГО НАРЕЧЕ· ДА НЕ СТРАСТНО РОЖЕСТВО ЕГО МЫНИМЪ· <i>He called him the Word so that we should not think his birth is subject to suffering.</i>

To my knowledge, no other cases have so far been traced in the OCS literature, in which the Greek modal adverb ἵσως, expressing probability/possibility, is translated by means of the verb МЫНѢТИ (“to mean”, “to think”, “to assume”, “to consider”), conjugated in the first-person singular present indicative. The identification of this very peculiar translation technique provides novel and compelling evidence in favour of the hypothesis that Constantine is the anonymous author of Or38~OCS-1. On a cautionary note, however, in Constantine’s translation of the First Discourse against the Arians ἵσως is rendered with the corresponding OCS adverb СЕГДА/СЪГДА (“probably”, “perhaps”)²⁰. Therefore, before a definitive answer can be given, a more in-depth study is required, covering a comprehensive analysis of the vocabulary, grammatical features and translation techniques of Or38~OCS-1.

¹⁸ Cramer 1844: 229.

¹⁹ Cramer 1844: 180.

²⁰ Atanasij 2022: 362. In this regard it is worth mentioning Slavova’s opinion, according to which Constantine adopted two different translation strategies in the *Didactic Gospel* and in the *First Discourse against the Arians* (see: Slavova 2021b: 262).

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