

A Philological Analysis of the Slavic Biblical Expression

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At present, the Synod Slavic Bible (SSB) is the official text of the Russian Orthodox Church, and the Church Slavonic language is the liturgical style or code of the Russian language and literature. The church's liturgical Christian texts belong to the oldest texts that appeared in the old Russian version of the Old Slavic or Church Slavonic language. These are famous manuscripts, such as the Ostromir Gospel (1056–1057), the Arkhangelsk Gospel (1092), the Novgorod office menology (1095–1097), “The Miracle Intelligent Psalter” (XI century), and “The Eugene Psalter” (XI century), etc. From the titles of the above texts, it can be concluded that most of them are parts of the Slavic Bible that were read during the divine service. Even though these texts are translations, they can be called the first works of Russian literature, which were written in the Cyrillic alphabet and served as the worldview, ideological and semantic basis of the original works of Russian authors. Despite its importance and antiquity, unfortunately the Bible in Church Slavonic or Synodal Slavic Bible (SSB) still has numerous "dark" sections. Meaning, it is unintelligible to understand places that have not been corrected for objective historical and subjective reasons. It seems that the work on the correction of “dark” places and the philological and historical study of the Synodal Slavic Bible and liturgical texts should be a top priority, not only for the Russian Church, but also for the Russian science. The aim of this paper is to explore the methodology of the “instance” method of correction of the “dark” sections for understanding places, which consists of a detailed analysis of the original text fragment containing the “dark” place for understanding, on a certain fragment. Furthermore, the practical task is to investigate the possibility of translation and explanation of such places.

Keywords: *Church slavonic language, Language intercultural communication.*



Introduction

The complete passage of the Slavic Bible, proposed for consideration in the present work, is: “*в вечер же субботный, свитаючи во едину от суббот*” (on the sabbath evening, at dawn in one from Saturdays). However, first you should consider the phrase: “*во едину от суббот*” (in one from Saturdays), which sounds very often at worship. Five of the eleven Sunday Gospels, which are read on the Sunday vesper and in the reading of the Liturgy on Holy Saturday, begin with these words. Actually, this expression is a temporal indicator.

These church readings themselves tell about the events of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his death on the cross, on Friday. Namely, about the arrival of some women (myrrophores) to the tomb of Jesus, who: “*купили ароматы, чтобы идти – помазать Его*” (bought perfumes to go and anoint Him) (Mk 16: 1). That is, to perform certain religious rites. According to the days’ count of the Jews, it was the first day of the week, which followed Saturday z.

The reference to the day of the Jesus’s resurrection, determined by count, is important in the context of the Gospel, because during his sermon Jesus spoke about this: “*Сыну Человеческому должно много пострадать, и быть отвержену старейшинами, первосвященниками и книжниками, и быть убиту, и в третий день воскреснуть*” (The Son of Man must suffer a lot and be rejected by the elders, high priests and sofers and be killed and rise on the third day) (Luke 9:22; Vereshchagin, 2012).

Thus, the strange expression of the Synodal Slavic Bible (SSB), “*во едину от суббот*” (in one from Saturdays), which according to the rules of the Church Slavonic language is translated only as “*в одну из суббот*” (in one of Saturdays), at first glance contradicts the statement about the resurrection of Jesus on the third day and requires clarification.

In order to conduct a “real-philological analysis” (Vereshchagin, 2012) of this expression, one should refer to the original ancient Greek text of the New Testament. Provided is a comparative table of the ancient Greek text on the (Nestle-Aland, 1993) publication and the Slavic text of the Synodal Slavic Bible (SSB) (The New, 2002). The expression is: “**В вечер же субботный, свитаючи во едину от суббот**” (on the sabbath evening, at dawn in one from Saturdays), from one of the New Testament church readings:

Table 1: Comparison between passage in Ancient Greek and Church Slavonic

Church Slavonic text	в вечер же субботный, свитаючи во едину от суббот прииде Мария Магдалина, и другая Мария, видети гроб (on the sabbath evening, at dawn in one from Saturdays Maria Magdalene, and the other Maria come, see the tomb) (Matt. 28: 1)
Ancient Greek text	Ὅψε δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων , ἦλθεν Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία θεωρῆσαι τὸν τάφον (Μθ. 28:1)

The investigated expression is highlighted in both the Slavic and Greek texts.

The form, *τῇ μιᾷ*, is the dative case in the dative time function of the quantitative Greek numeral, *εἷς, μία, ἓν – один, одна, одно (one)*. The form, *τῶν σαββάτων*, is the genitive case of the plural of the lexical item, *σάββατον - Saturday*.

The translation “в одну из суббот” (in one of Saturdays) is impossible because *τῇ μιᾷ* is a feminine form, and the noun *τὸ σάββατον* is neuter. Therefore, their adjustment in translation was a mistake, which, in fact, was made by the translators of the modern edition of the Slavic Bible. It should be assumed that the numeral, *τῇ μιᾷ*, is consistent with the implied noun *ἡμέρα - day* (in the dative case), since it is a question of indicating the day by count. Such an omission of a noun is common in ancient Greek. In addition, there is a polysemy of the Greek numeral *εἷς, μία, ἓν - one, one, one*, which can be used instead of the ordinal number, *πρῶτος - the first*. This is evidenced by the dictionary Liddell-Scott in the entry for the numeral, *εἷς, μία, ἓν* (Jones, 1996). Thus, the first part of the expression should be translated, “on the first day”.

Next, we consider the form, “*τῶν σαββάτων*”. In terms of the noun, *τὸ σάββατον*, polysemy also occurs. In the dictionary entry for this word, the Liddell-Scott dictionary gives the meanings: 1. “*The Hebrew Sabbath*” means “*Jewish Saturday*”. That is, the Sabbath day itself, Saturday; 2. “*period of seven days, week*” means “*a period of seven days, a week*”. Moreover, as examples for the meaning of the week, the dictionary cites extracts of the New Testament texts of Matt. 28:1, Mk. 16:9, and John. 20:1, which contain expressions like *τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων*. Moreover, the noun, *τὸ σάββατον*, in this sense, can be used both in the singular and in the plural: *εἰς μίαν σαββάτων* (Matt. 28:1); *πρώτη σαββάτου* (Mark 16:9); *Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων* (John 20:1).

So, the form, “*τῶν σαββάτων*”, should be understood in the meaning of “*week*” (Jones, 1996), and as such, the meaning of the whole expression becomes clear. In all fragments containing the expression, *τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων*, and similar ones, this expression has the meaning of “*first day of the week*”.

Next, for a review of fragments containing the expression, “во едину от суббот” (in one from Saturdays), and similar ones, we present a comparative table of Church Slavonic texts on the Synodal Slavic Bible (SSB) (The New, 2002), the ancient Greek (after Nestle-Aland) (Nestle-Aland, 1993), and Russian texts on the Synodal Russian Bible (SRB) (The Bible, 2006) of this expression (the number of the evangelical church reading is indicated in square brackets):

Table 2: Comparison of passages in Church Slavonic, Ancient Greek and Russian

Church Slavonic text	Ancient Greek text	Russian text
1. В вечер же субботный, свитаючи во едину от суббот, прииде Мария Магдалина, и другая Мария, видети гроб (on the sabbath evening, at dawn in one from Saturdays comes Maria Magdalene, and the other Maria, see the tomb) (Matt. 28:1 [Holy Saturday])	Ὅψε δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων, ἦλθεν Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ ἡ ἄλλη Μαρία θεωρῆσαι τὸν τάφον (Mt. 28:1)	По прошествии же субботы, на рассвете первого дня недели, пришла Мария Магдалина и другая Мария посмотреть гроб (after Saturday, at dawn in the first day of the week Maria Magdalene, and the other Maria come, see the tomb) (Matt. 28:1)
2. И зело заутра во едину от суббот приидоша на гроб (And very early, in the one from Saturday, they come to the tomb (Mark 16:2 [2])	καὶ λίαν πρωὶ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου (Μκ. 16:2)	И весьма рано, в первый день недели, приходят ко гробу (And very early, on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb (Mark 16:2)
3. Воскрес же Иисус заутра в первую субботу, явился прежде Марии Магдалины (Jesus resurrected early in the first Saturday, first appeared to Maria Magdalene) (Mark 16:9)	Ἀναστὰς δὲ πρωὶ πρώτη σαββάτου ἐφάνη πρῶτον Μαρία τῇ Μαγδαληνῇ (Μκ. 16:9)	Воскресши рано в первый день недели, Иисус явился сперва Марии Магдалине (By resurrection early on the first day of the week, Jesus first appeared to Maria Magdalene) (Mark 16: 9)
4. Во едину же от суббот зело рано приидоша на гроб (In the one from Saturdays did he arrive early at the tomb) (Luke 24:1 [4])	τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ὄρθρου βαθέως ἐπὶ τὸ μνῆμα ἦλθον φέρουσαι (Λκ. 24:1)	В первый же день недели, очень рано, неся приготовленные ароматы, пришли они ко гробу (On the very first day of the week, very early, carrying the aromas prepared, they came to the tomb) (Luke 24: 1)

<p>5. Во едину же от суббот Мария Магдалина прииде заутра, еще сущи тме, на гроб (In one from the Saturday, Maria Magdalene came in the morning, still there, on the tomb (John 20:1 [7])</p>	<p>Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται πρῶτὸ σκοτίας ἔτι οὔσης εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον</p>	<p>В первый же день недели Мария Магдалина приходит ко гробу рано, когда было ещё темно (On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb early, when it was still dark (John 20:1)</p>
<p>6. Сущу же позде, в день той, во едину от суббот (Later, on that day, in one from Saturdays (John 20:19 [9])</p>	<p>Οὔσης οὖν ὀψίας τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων (Io. 20:19)</p>	<p>В тот же первый день недели вечером (On the same first day of the week in the evening (John 20:19)</p>
<p>7. По единей от суббот кийждо вас да полагает у себе сохраняя, еже аще что благо поспешится (After one from Saturday, everyone supposes you to keep it, even if good things hurry (1 Cor. 16:2)</p>	<p>κατὰ μίαν σαββάτου ἕκαστος ὑμῶν παρ' ἑαυτῶ τιθέτω θησαυρίζων ὅ τι ἐὰν εὐοδῶτα (Κορ. 16:2)</p>	<p>В первый день недели каждый из вас пусть отлагает у себя и сберегает, сколько позволит ему состояние (On the first day of the week, let each of you set aside and save as much as his state will allow (1 Cor. 16:2)</p>

From the table above, it is clear that the Synodal Russian Bible (SRB) provides the correct translation: “on the first day of the week”, and there is a legitimate addition to the meaning of the lexeme “day”, the loss of which is not usual in the Russian or Church Slavonic languages.

Methodology

An interesting fact is that the expression, “во едину от суббот” (in one from Saturdays), in the nineteenth century attracted the attention of the famous Slavic scholar and translator of the Holy Scripture into Tatar, and other languages of the Volga region and Eastern Russia, Nikolai Ilminsky. He compared the Slavic texts of this expression in the Synodal Slavic Bible (SSB) and the Ostrom Gospel (Ostr), whose manuscript belongs to 1056–1057 AD. This manuscript is the oldest Eastern Slavic translation of the Gospel, and, according to many researchers, belongs to the Cyril and Methodius tradition of the translation of the Holy Scripture. This fact was mentioned by A. Kh. Vostokov, and modern Slavic scholar E. M. Vereshchagin agrees with him in his detailed study on the Ostromir Gospel: “Accordingly, we are obliged to reiterate A. Kh. Vostokov, according to whom Ostr is “the closest to the beginning of the Slovenian written language, monument of the Church Slovenian language”

(Vereshchagin, 2012). N. I. Ilminsky compared the following versions of this expression from the Ostrom Gospel (Ostr): В вечер суботный, свитающему **первому субботы**, приде Мария Магдалины и другая Мария видеть гроб (In the Sabbath evening, at dawn of the first of Saturday, Maria Magdalina and the other Maria come, see the tomb) (Matthew 28:1); И зело заутра в **единый субботы** придоша на гроб (And in the very morning in the one of Saturday came upon the tomb) (Mark 16:2); and, В **единый же субботы** зело рано придоша жены на гроб (In the one of Saturday very early wives come to the tomb) (Luke 24:1), with the expression, “**во едину от суббот**” (in the one from Saturdays), of the later Synodal Slavic Bible (SSB), admitting the most ancient translation of the Ost more correctly than the modern Slavic text.

Consider a fragment of N.I. Ilminsky’s argument: “In the latest editions, the numeral adjective corresponds to the word “Saturday”. In Greek in all places there is a numeral adjective in the feminine gender: “τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων”, meanwhile the word “σάββατον” “Saturday” is of the neuter gender. Obviously, the numeral adjective corresponds to the implied word “ἡμέρα” “day”; therefore, the ancient translator correctly put the numeral adjective in the masculine, and the later correctors are wrong because the word “σάββατον”, often in the plural “σάββατα”, in the Gospel means either the Saturday itself or the whole week ... The Old Slavonic text understands the word “Saturday” in the sense of “week” when it mentions the first Saturday (that is, the day), the one (ie, day) from the Saturday”. (Vereshchagin, 2012)

As a conclusion, it should be noted that in this expression in the Synodal Slavic Bible (SSB), the clarification is needed in order to avoid the unintelligibility of the expression, “**во едину от суббот**” (in one from Saturdays). This editing should be performed based on the Greek text, considering the use of the Church Slavonic and Russian languages.

Having considered the aphorism, “**во едину от суббот**” (in the one from Saturdays), one should pay attention to the expression, “в вечер же суботный” (on the sabbath evening). With these words, the Gospel reading begins on Holy Saturday: “**В вечер же суботный, свитаючи во едину от суббот**, прииде Мария Магдалина, и другая Мария, видети гроб” (**On the sabbath evening, at dawn in the one from Saturdays**, come Maria Magdalene, and the other Maria to see the tomb) (Matthew 28:1). In this phrase, bewilderment is caused by a contradiction between the first and second parts of the phrase in relation to the indication of time. On the one hand, it is “вечер суботный” (the sabbath evening), and on the other, it is “свитаючи во едину от суббот” (at dawn in the one from Saturdays), the dawn of the first day of the week.

We should refer to the Greek text of this phrase: “**Ὁψὲ δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων**”. In the Slavic text, the word “вечер” (evening) translated the Greek word

ὀψέ. However, in Greek, ὀψέ is not a noun, but an adverb with basic meanings: after a long time/“спустя долгое время”; at length/“наконец”, “в конце концов”; and, late/“поздно”, as the Liddell-Scott dictionary indicates (Jones, 1996). In addition, ὀψέ is also used as a preposition in a genitive case with the meaning after/“после”. In the same Liddell-Scott dictionary, the lexeme ὀψέ specifically cites precisely this expression, ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων, from the biblical verse of Matthew 28:1, in which ὀψέ is used as an excuse with this meaning, and the whole expression is translated: “after the sabbath day” (по прошествии субботнего дня) (Jones, 1996).

In the Protestant, Grigory Dyachenko’s Church Slavonic dictionary, in a special article on the expression, “субботний вечер” (Saturday evening), it provides the following explanation: “The expression “в вечер субботний” (on the sabbath evening) does not mean that the myrrophores went to the tomb on Saturday evening ... according to the testimony of St. Mark they used this time for the purchase of aromas (Mk. 16: 1); and therefore they could hardly keep up with the tomb of Jesus in the evening, since night in the East comes quickly. At the same time, it should be noted that although the Greek word ὀψέ means actually “позднее время”, “вечером” (“late time”, “in the evening”); but in conjunction with the genitive case, as in this case (ὀψὲ δὲ σαββάτων) “в вечер суббот” (“on the Saturday evening”), it is used in the sense of “после”, “по прошествии” (“after”) and among secular writers. Such an understanding relates to the further word “свитающи” (“at dawn”) and with St. Mark’s words “зело заутра, возсиявшу солнцу” (“in the very morning, rising to the sun”) (Dyachenko, 2013).

Thus, it can be concluded that the Russian Synodal Bible presents the correct translation of this expression: “**по прошествии же субботы**” (after the Saturday), which logically correctly continues with the above expression, “**на рассвете первого дня недели**” (at dawn of the first day of the week). The translation of this phrase into English is identical in meaning: “Now after the Saturday, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb” (Matt. 28:1) (Thomas, 1982).

In the Slavic text of the SSB: “**В вечер же субботний, свитающи во едину от суббот, прииде Мария Магдалина, и другая Мария, видети гроб**” (On the sabbath evening, at dawn in the one from Saturdays, comes Maria Magdalene, and the other Maria, see the tomb) (Matthew 28), to overcome the unintelligibility, clarification of the text is required.

Finally, we give an interpretation of one of the most authoritative Christian exegetes of Theophilactus the Bulgarian, on this expression of this Bible verse (Matt. 28:1):

“По прошествии субботы” (After the Saturday), “В вечер субботний” (In the Saturday evening), is equivalent to what Luke said: “*глубоким утром*”(in the very morning) (Luke

24:1), and with the words of Mark: “*при восходе солнца*” (at the sunrise) (Mark 16: 1), because here, the meaning of the sun is the morning rays of the sun. When the eighth hour of the night comes, then the beginning of the next day is, and, as they think, the morning comes. Therefore, then there was, on the one hand, the Saturday evening, and on the other hand, the beginning of the Lord's Day, which the evangelist calls, “*единым от суббот*” (the one from Saturdays), for the days of the week were called Saturdays, and the first day was called the one, so that the Lord's Day is “*един от суббот*” (the one from Saturdays). That is, the first day of the week; the one closest to this first day was called the second, then the third, and then the rest, therefore, the Lord rose again in three days. How are the three days counted? At eight o'clock on Friday, he was crucified. From this, to the ninth hour, was darkness; count it for me as night. Subsequently, from the ninth hour, was light; this is day — here is the full day: night and day. Further, Friday night and Saturday day are the second day. Again, the Saturday night and the morning of the Lord's day, which was defined by Matthew: “*во едину от суббот, на рассвете*” (in the one from Saturdays, at dawn), for the morning is taken in the counting for the full day, and this is the third day. Otherwise, you can count three days: on Friday the Lord gave up his spirit, this is one day; on Saturday he was in the tomb, this is another day; and on the night of the Lord's day, he was resurrected, but from its part, the Lord's day is considered to be another day, so there are three days (Matthew, 2001).

We also provide A.P. Lopukhin's explanation of this place: “The simplest explanation may be as follows. The evangelist's expression *ὄψε δε σαβάτων* belongs to the category of those that are difficult to explain grammatically. Nevertheless, the real meaning of them is clear, and of course, bearing in mind precisely this meaning, Blass (Gramm. P. 96 translates the expression “*spat am sabath*” - late on Saturday, which almost corresponds to the Russian translation both of the evangelist's further words, and with the testimony of Mark 16:1. After *ἐπιφωσκούση*, some add a day (*ἡμέρα*), others add an hour (*ώρα*). Thus, late on Saturday, when the day dawned on one of the Saturdays; or when the hour dawned - it was a day or an hour of dawn. Substitution *ωρα* (Zahn) is more likely, because further *μίαν* implies *ἡμέραν*, and, therefore, repeating *ἡμέραν* would be completely unnecessary. Since *σάββατα* was used among the Jews in the sense of the week, the meaning of the expression *εἰς μίαν σαβάτων* - the first day of the week - is understandable. This expression was used among the rabbis. The general meaning of the first words of the verse in question is that the midnight had not yet ended, attributed by the evangelist to the previous Saturday, and the dawn of the next day had just approached, etc. This indicates the time when the women approached the tomb, without indicating when they left the house ... They point to a “curious coincidence”, that among the Jews, relatives and friends of the deceased person usually went to his tomb on the third day after his death (when the corruption of the body supposedly began), to make sure that the deceased person is really dead” (Lopukhin, 1913).

Conclusion

In A.P. Lopukhin's detailed comment, it is important to highlight the idea that the Russian translation is quite correct, and the fragment of Mark 16:1 is a parallel place to the fragment under consideration, where the same idea is expressed in other words, namely: **καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου** – “**по прошествии субботы**” (after the Saturday). In the Synodal Russian Bible, both verses (Matthew 28:1 and Mark 16:1) are translated almost identically: “по прошествии же субботы” (after the Saturday) (Matthew 28: 1), and “по прошествии субботы” (after Saturday) (Mark 16:1). Following the logic of the translators of the Russian synodal translation, we can offer to adjust the translation into the Church Slavonic language of this expression, in the fragment of Matthew 28:1 with Mark 16:1, especially since the vocabulary meaning of the lexical item **ὀψέ** is “**потом**”, “**после**”, “**затем**” (later, after, then), and the grammatical commentary in the dictionaries of Liddell-Skott and Dyachenko, as well as the exegetes' comments for this place, allow this to be performed. Thus, we can offer a correct translation of the expression, **ὀψέ δε σαβάτων** – “**минувшей же субботе**” (After the Saturday), as well as a corrected translation of the whole verse of Matthew 28:1: “**Минувшей же субботе, в первый день седмицы** прииде Мария Магдалина, и другая Мария, видети гроб (**After the Saturday, Saturday, on the first day of the week**, Maria Magdalene, and the other Maria come, see the tomb). In some editions of the Gospel in the Church Slavonic language, a reference is already made to this expression: “**по вечери же субботнем**” (after the Saturday evening) (The New, 2002). This correction option is also acceptable, based on the principle of minimising corrections. Although, it is not quite correct, since the Greek word, **ὀψέ**, as shown above, is not a noun.

As a post scriptum to the analysis of this statement, it should be noted that it is necessary to analyse all fragments in which the lexical item, Saturday, has the meaning of “неделя”(week), and where necessary, replace it with the Slavic “седмица”, that means “неделя” (week), in order to avoid unintelligibility. For example, the expression of the Gospel proverb about the tax collector and the Pharisee: “пошуся дважды в субботу” (I will take two times on Saturday) (Luke 18:12), remains incomprehensible without explanation.



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