When there exist two translations of a work made in one and same period, this raises many questions related to textual criticism, linguistics, and literary criticism as well as the problem of the reception of the biblical text used in the work. On more than one occasion some authors (Bláhová 1982: 67; Алексеев 1985: 74–75, 76; Алексеев 1999: 69–70 and others) have pointed out the significance of and the opportunities for investigating the biblical quotations in non-biblical books and the importance of the results both for the translated text in question and for the biblical text. The present article will set out some preliminary observations on the translation of the biblical quotations in two fourteenth-century translations of the Oration for the Nativity of the Theotokos by St. John Damascene.

Students of the rhetorical prose of St. John Damascene note as its characteristic features the tendency of the author to quote Scripture and to explain passages in it that are more difficult as well as to use many biblical reminiscences, which presupposes a public with theological competence (Louth 2002: 230). The Bible and its imagery have such a strong presence in the oration under discussion that the exceedingly large number of biblical quotations and references is one of the reasons why Kotter, who published these works by St. John Damascene, voiced in his edition of the Greek text doubts as to the authorship of the Oration for the Nativity of the Theotokos (Kotter 1988: 149). Other research scholars such as Louth, however, do not accept without reservations the arguments advanced by Kotter (Louth 2002: 226). The question of the authorship of the Oration will not be discu-

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1 BHG 1087; CPG 8060; Kotter 1988: 147–182.
ssed here. It is beyond doubt, however, that its text interprets the Nativity of the Theotokos exactly in the spirit and style of St. John Damascene, a peculiar synthesis of poetic eulogy and philosophical and theological thinking which finds inspiration and solid backing in Sacred Scripture.

The oration is known in two Middle Bulgarian translations. One of the translations belongs to a larger and more widely represented group of sources, the group of the well-known Zographou Collection, a menaion panegyric covering the period from 1 September to 19 January and kept in the Zographou Monastery on Mount Athos under № 107 (Зогр 107). Research indicates that the codex was written in the 1480s most probably on Mount Athos or in Tarnovo (Иванова 1969: 107–108). From the group of the Zographou Collection I have so far also used the following manuscripts: Пог 873, РАН 302, ЦИАИ 182, РМ 4/5, ГИЛФ 56, УУБ 1, МСПЦ 139 and Хил 496. The other Middle Bulgarian translation is found in MS № 307 from the collection of the SS Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia (НБКМ 307). Collection № 307 contains vitae and orations chosen from menaion panegyrics and from the triodion panegyric. This text dates from the fourteenth century and comes from eastern Bulgaria (Цонев 1910: 248–249). Other manuscripts from the same group as НБКМ 307 which have been used in the study so far are Хил 473, Цет.64, ZIII.c.24, Хил 457, ZIII.b.20 and Хил 439.

Twenty-one exact biblical quotations and over 120 biblical allusions are noted in the index to the edition of the Greek text of the Oration for the Nativity of the Theotokos (Kotter 1988: 556–569). But as there are some minor discrepancies between the index and the quotations that are marked by the editor as exact in the text of the Oration, in the present article the material will be refined in the process of investigation. Besides this, one should note that the present article will discuss only the exact biblical quotations from two translations of the fourteenth century. Their Greek text is quoted from the edition by Kotter (Kotter 1988) and is collated with the Septuagint text (Rahlfs 1950) and the edition of the New Testament of Nestle-Aland (Nestle, Aland 1996).

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