

## How Do We Read the Gospel Today?

Nizam Mardini

This book, “The True Meaning of the Gospel of Christ,” released by Dar al-Farabi Publishers, was authored by a number of Arab scholars who participated in this project, and overseen by Mr. Mazhar Mallouhi. The contents of this book complement the previous alternative readings of the Holy Bible, and this leads us to an essential question concerning the purpose of this new reading.

There is no reason for a reader to be reticent while flipping through the pages of this book, since this is simply a translation of Holy Scripture. We must particularly keep in mind that a translation is a reflection of someone’s personal understanding and interpretation of the text in a personal style in a language other than the original language. Nevertheless, a translation faces the danger of failing to faithfully present the intended meaning in its form, style, and meaning, or of adding to original vision in its material and historical setting, or of treating the religious text as a kind of technical and mechanical writing. However, metaphor is rooted in the Gospel as it is in the Qur’an, albeit in different forms. This is what brings us back to the question we first started with: why this new reading of the metaphors and meanings of the Gospel?

In order to answer this question, we should mention four points which distinguish this new contribution from the many previous translations of the Bible:

- This reading attempts to communicate the meaning and metaphor hidden behind the words, since ideas are spirit and words are the embodiment of ideas, or of this spirit. When ideas are solidified into words, this is where the role of meaning and metaphor comes into play in this reading. This work has given the words of the text space and flexibility in order to enable the reader to understand that the written sentence is not the end of the story.
- This reading strives to fashion the words in accordance with the culture and time and place in which they occurred. In other words, these words are like a bridge that links between what was written more than two thousand years ago and our modern culture and current events. It is just as one theologian said: he would hold the Bible in his right hand and the daily newspaper in his left hand, attempting to answer the problems posed in the newspaper by means of the Holy Scriptures. But it is not possible to do this except by means of the bridge that links the two sides.
- Some marginal notes were added to this translation, in addition to a number of articles that address topics of concern to the reader, not least of which are some discoveries made by linguists and social scientists.
- This reading has attempted to be a neutral reading, so that all readers of Arabic can accept and understand it without feeling it to be strange.

There is no doubt that it is normal for there to be a plethora of interpretations of holy books, which are legitimized by the numerous historical conditions surrounding their emergence, conditions connected with their acceptance and preservation. For a religious

text is always in its origin an oral text. It is oral in its divine inspiration, oral also in its transmission and dissemination as a message. At this point it is necessarily a diverse text, with a diversity coming upon it during its transmission with changes and distortion occurring either great or small, whether intentional or not.

This review appeared in *An-Nahar*, *Al-Mustaqbal*, and *Al-Balad* newspapers in Lebanon.