

blood of Christ, and of the Eucharist as the sharing of the body and blood of Christ sacrificed for us, remind us directly of the crucified Christ; but the rites are at the same time efficacious signs of the triumphant deliverance of Christ at the Resurrection. Peter speaks of the recipient of Baptism both as 'sprinkled with his blood' and as regenerated 'by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 Pet. 1:2-3). Similarly the Holy Eucharist according to St Paul 'proclaims the death of the Lord' (1 Cor. 11:26), and yet it is a sharing of 'the table of the Lord' (1 Cor. 10:21), the joyous banquet of which only those partake who are raised up with him and are come into God's kingdom.

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QUESTION AND ANSWER

The publishers of the New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures claim that it is the most accurate translation yet produced. Is this so?

This version, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, sets out to provide a translation into modern English of the Greek New Testament, and contains a foreword, a translation based principally on the Westcott and Hort text, and an appendix in which there are longer comments on certain verses. The foreword is principally devoted to the surprising thesis that the writers of the New Testament wrote the sacred tetragrammaton (YHWH or less accurately JHVH¹) in the majority of cases where all our existing manuscripts read *kurios* (Lord) or *theos* (God). The first argument to support this thesis lies in the claim that this was the practice in Greek translations of the Old Testament. There is evidence of this in certain manuscripts of the Septuagint and of the versions of Aquila and Symmachus,² but the practice was by no means universal, and on this point the distinguished Cambridge scholar H. B. Swete wrote: 'there is no reason to suppose that any copyists of the Alexandrian version hesitated to write $\sigma\bar{\kappa}\varsigma$ or $\bar{\kappa}\epsilon$ for *yhw̄h*.'³ In a footnote he adds that 'With the exception of

¹ Vocalised Jehovah: this inaccurate representation was known as early as the thirteenth century.

² cf. G. Lambert, 'Que signifie le nom divin YHWH?', *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 1952, p. 900

³ *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, Cambridge 1914, p. 39

the Genizah Palimpsest . . . the Greek MSS use it solely in their excerpts from the non-Septuagintal columns of the Hexapla.' The second supposition necessary for the thesis is that the custom followed by certain copyists of the Greek Old Testament *must* have been observed by the New Testament authors. The evidence for this is completely lacking, and the possibility is not considered by any competent textual critic. Nevertheless the translators proceed to render the words *kurios* and *theos* in very many places by the word Jehovah. In support of this they quote, in the style of critical editions, the reading of the tetragrammaton in medieval and renaissance translations into Hebrew of our Greek New Testament! The value of these translations for the establishing of the original reading is, it need hardly be said, absolutely nil.

In the translation itself an attempt has been made to render important Greek words wherever they occur by one English equivalent. It is no doubt to some extent due to this that in many places the reader meets strange and awkward expressions, such as: 'So they began to stumble at him' (Matt. 13:57); 'Then also many will be stumbled' (Matt. 24:10); 'And responsively Peter said' (Mark 9:5); 'Lazarus in the bosom position with Him' (Luke 16:23). There are many others. Apart from such examples of modern English, there are cases where the rendering is inaccurate. Here is Matt. 27:52: 'And the memorial tombs were opened and many bodies of the holy ones that had fallen asleep were thrown up (and persons, coming out from among the memorial tombs after his being raised up, entered into the holy city), and they became visible to many people.' Footnotes add 'raised up' as an alternative for 'thrown up,' and for 'persons' 'they'; but not 'the bodies.' Clearly the translation is inadequate. The Greek word is *ēgerthēsan*, consistently used throughout the Greek Bible for the raising up by God of someone for His special purpose, and in the New Testament, of the resurrection, whether of Christ or of Christians. Indeed the word is used of Christ only a little later in this passage, where it is correctly rendered 'raised up.' Moreover the Greek offers no reason for claiming a change of subject as the brackets in the text suggest, and as the footnote categorically states. The use of the masculine participle 'coming out' is clearly seen from the context to be a construction *ad sensum* referring to the holy ones. Another inaccurate rendering occurs at John 1:1: 'The Word was a god.' One has only to consider the emphatic monotheism of the Jews and the nature of their charges against the Christians to realise that no Christian writer could ever conceive such an expression, which would savour of pagan polytheism and add strength to Jewish anti-Christian polemic. Moreover the context, recalling the opening passages of

Genesis, clearly attributes Divine power to the Word. The work of creation, there predicated of God in terms of strict monotheism, is here predicated of the Word. In the sentence *theos* is simply the predicate, and none of the arguments advanced in the long note to be found in the appendix is of any avail to show that this is any other than a perfectly normal Greek usage identifying the Word with God. Indeed the somewhat truculent language in which the note is couched leads one to feel that there is here something of the *odium theologicum*. In John 8:58 we have the astonishing translation: 'Before Abraham came into existence, I have been,' with an equally astonishing note to justify it. Anyone else would translate *egō eimi* as 'I am' but this is rejected by the translators, although the echo of Exod. 3:14 is the obvious climax and the explanation of the Jewish reaction. These examples, and others such as the words of consecration¹ ('This means my body' etc.), serve to show the generally poor quality of this version. It is poor mainly because it is tendentious in the extreme.

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BOOK REVIEWS

- C. C. Martindale, S.J., *The Gospel according to St Mark*, Stonyhurst Scripture Manuals. Longmans, London 1955. pp. xxxii + 177. 7s 6d.
 Ditto. *The Gospel according to St John*. 1956. pp. xxiv + 175.
 Ditto. *The Gospel according to St Matthew*. 1957. pp. xxvii + 224.
 Ditto. *The Gospel according to St Luke*. 1957. pp. xxviii + 203.
 Ditto. *The Acts of the Apostles*. 1958. pp. xxxiii + 199.

Catholic Scriptural study, even popular Catholic Scriptural study, has not stagnated in the fifty years since Fr Sidney Smith or the thirty since Madame Cecilia. The 'How-many-children-had-Lady-Macbeth?' school has been losing ground (not without accomplishing something) and the times are happily changing. Sooner or later (commonly about thirty years later) disturbances in the upper atmosphere come to be felt in our lower air. The great Lagrange has now come down to our school-desks, bounded in a nutshell. Fr Martindale generously acknowledges his debt, which is indeed considerable but which does not manage to obliterate the lively personality of the distinguished Jesuit of whom the English public is so proud.

'The gospels are not "lives" of our Lord.' This is the first line

¹ For a discussion of these words, cf. P. Benoit, 'The Holy Eucharist—II,' *Scripture*, ix, 1957, pp. 5f.