

there are men who mishandle the Word of God? There are those who would turn a theorem of Euclid into a cooking recipe. We might just as well screen our congregations, simply because some people go away from a service without a personal faith in Christ. The preached Word of God is open to all, just as the written Word is, and our translators no less than our preachers, if we are faithful, rely on the Holy Ghost to make it plain.

Here, then, through the efforts of those whom we salute today, is the Voice of God to inspire the private worshipper, to instruct the public congregation; here is the startingpoint of the public teacher and preacher, to be read and pondered, with Scripture compared with Scripture.⁴⁰ Here is evidence that the translators were willing, in so far as they themselves were preachers, for their preached message to be tested by the Word of God, known to the congregation. Here is a challenge to all of us engaged in the task of training men for the ministry: when we have had our fill of criticism and of introduction, of biblical history and of biblical background, and have given the same to our students; then it is high time to let religion itself come into our classrooms, for the lecturer to give not only what scholars have conveyed to him but also what he has learnt from the living God himself. The truth of God must not descend to a mere examination paper, and the Son of God to a pass mark. When we thus use the Bible we shall find, with Dr. Vincent Taylor, that the New Testament names of Jesus are the only ones with a foreseeable future, and that "this fact is one of the neglected arguments for the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture".⁴¹ "*Le commentaire peut errer: le texte subsiste*". And now this Book has been given to us, for "all things are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3 : 21-23).⁴²

Book Review

The Gospel of St. Mark — A New Translation in Simple English, by Edward Vernon. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 3/6.

It has been confidently stated on many occasions in recent years that English has now become the most important missionary language in the world today. Substantial evidence in support of this claim is the fact that though the Scriptures in part or whole have been translated into many hundreds of languages and dialects, in by far the larger number of seminaries, theological colleges and training centres, in Africa, India and S. E. Asia, English remains the essential key to the libraries of Christian theology and doctrine. In the nature of things, it will be a very long time before the major languages of India and Africa have their own vernacular libraries. This being so, all new translations of the Scriptures into modern

⁴⁰ Cf. O. Cullmann, *Peter* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), pp. 213f. and n.

⁴¹ *The Names of Jesus*, pp. 174f.

⁴²Cf. also Lindsay: *History of the Reformation*, Vol. I, pp. 453-467; G. W. Bromiley, "The Authority of Scripture", and D. Lamont, "Revelation and Inspiration", on pp. 15-23 and 24-30 of the *New Bible Commentary*, edited by F. Davidson (London: The Intersarsity Fellowship, 1953).

English have significance, not only for the theological teacher but for the translator also, since the aim of both is to shed light upon the original text of Scripture.

This remains true even where the translator has been thinking of a very different type of constituency from that of the mission field. In the translator's Foreword, Edward Vernon nowhere suggests that he is thinking of that wider constituency, but stating that "the ideal would be a version in which no word would be employed which could not be readily understood by the average intelligent child of twelve years old and upwards", he obviously says something of considerable interest to all those who use English as a lingua franca. It soon becomes apparent that the translator is thinking of English children, in the English setting. Jairus, for instance, is "the headmaster". His daughter is "a little lass". A soldier who is sent to cut off John the Baptist's head is "the big guardsman". And to be first in the kingdom of heaven is "to top the list". But none of this detracts in any way from the interest or value of the experiment. Unlike some of his predecessors, Edward Vernon does not make use of any artificial word counts. For this reason the success or failure of his attempt to make the gospel clear to a child of twelve is a matter of special interest. In the opinion of the writer he succeeds on the whole, though occasionally at some cost, and in one or two instances by taking somewhat dubious risks.

In the attempt to produce a book the style of which flows easily, there is inevitably a tendency to iron out much of the roughness of Mark's style. Rightly or wrongly, the form of the book is that of an ordinary English story, with the material divided into chapters for which titles have been ingeniously devised. For instance, the chapter dealing with Herodias' daughter is called "The Dancing Princess". It must be said, however, that though this method of sub-division may be effective for the translator's purposes, it disguises the true nature of the Markan material. Perhaps this does not matter very much and there are certainly adequate compensations, not least the fact that the dramatic element in so many episodes is brilliantly enhanced. No little deftness has been shown in securing this end, and it is here that the translator is at his best. Though this involves him in paraphrase in many instances, the effect is telling. For instance, *ἔκτεινον* is translated "put your hands straight out, fingers and all". When told that His mother and brothers are awaiting Him, Jesus replies, "'Who is a real mother and a real brother to Me? There they are!', *looking round Him at the circle of eager, listening faces*"; and the episode of the Gadarine swine concludes with the words, "What a sensation it caused!" which, coming as it does at the end of one of his chapters is an impressive climax and an effective paraphrase of the words, *καὶ πάντες ἐθαύμαζον*.

It cannot be doubted that any English child of twelve will read this gospel of St. Mark with understanding and pleasure, but this does not altogether exonerate the translator from responsibility for certain lapses. Is it right, for instance, to make Jesus say to the man with the withered hand, "Come up to the front here, *nearer the platform*" or to speak of Jesus preaching "in the village halls and churches"? Some may think that the use of the phrase "merry and bright" in 2 : 19 is a needless concession to

colloquialism and the specification of the small fish in 6 : 34-44 as "trout" is arbitrary, to say the least. There is also the somewhat ambiguous substitution of the word "Bible" for "Scriptures" and "church" for "synagogue", while Jesus Himself is made to speak of His followers as "Christians", this being a partial attempt to overcome the difficulty of translating ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, "in My name". Instances such as these, and there are many of them, make it clear that the snare in the way of a translator who has set before himself the necessity of being intelligible to one particular age-group is that of paraphrase. Readers will differ considerably among themselves as to the justification of this in different contexts, but there is no doubting that several instances are most effective, for instance, "Better to go one-eyed in God's way than to go with both eye's open into a hell that for ever eats your heart out and where the flames of regret never die down" (9 : 47, 48), or again (5 : 27), of the woman with the issue of blood, "People had told her about Jesus, so she crept through the crowd towards Him, *murmuring to herself*, 'If I can even touch His clothes, I shall be better'. At last she stretched out her hand behind Him and began to finger His cloak. Immediately she was well". This is surely a good instance of successful paraphrase, for the words "crept" and "murmuring" are not represented in the Greek, though the whole tone and atmosphere of the passage suggest their appropriateness.

Less happy attempts to secure simplicity are found in 6 : 41 where the verb εὐλογέω is translated, "asked God to use them", or 7 : 29 where, in answer to the Syrophoenician woman, Jesus says, "Go straight home, and you will discover that your answer has cured your little girl" — a translation that has no warrant in the Greek. Later in the same chapter, verse 34, the simple word ἐστέρναξεν is translated by the phrase, "He took a deep breath, as if forcing away everything that choked ear and mouth". In 8 : 15, the word ζύμη, "leaven" appears as "stew" — "The Pharisees and Herod are preparing a dangerous stew for Me", surely a most infelicitous phrase. And in 8 : 31 a reference to "elders, high priests and scribes" appears simply as "people who should know better" — convenient, but hardly translation! Three further instances of under-translation in the interests of a dangerous simplification are in 8 : 34 where "to take up the cross" appears "to endure heavy and hurting burdens". Again in 10 : 17 inheriting eternal life becomes on the lips of the young man, "Teach me how I can live the best life", and four verses later on we are told that "Jesus liked the look of the young man", a drastic watering down of the word ἠγάπησεν.

Nothing, perhaps, is more easy and less fair to a translator, however, than merely to list passages which are open to question in this way. In order to savour the real merit of the translation one should take it and read it through at a sitting. The general conclusion about this version will probably be that it is a brave attempt to prove a particular point, and that in the main it succeeds. It is not a version from which one would wish to translate, but undoubtedly it will yield suggestive ideas to any who handle it with discernment and discretion.

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