

Readers' Corner

From J. L. Swellengrebel

The question on the inclusive or exclusive pronoun in John 4 in the July 1958 TBT Readers' Corner set me thinking. Most languages in the Indonesian Archipelago differentiate between inclusive and exclusive pronouns. The Toba-Batta translation (North Central Sumatra) uses the inclusive pronoun in v. 12, 'our father Jacob', the exclusive pronoun in the rest of the verses mentioned. In the Classic Malay, Modern Malay, Sundanese, and Balinese versions the exclusive pronoun is used throughout vs. 12, 20, and 25.

Notwithstanding this "cloud of witnesses" for the exclusive pronoun, I feel inclined to another solution. The Samaritan woman, in my view, is trying to get the better of Jesus; she appeals to Jacob (v. 12) and to 'our fathers' (v. 20) as to authorities higher than Jesus. If this is true, then it was important for her to show that those authorities were acknowledged by Jesus also. Therefore, we can imagine her to have thought or said, 'Your and my ancestor' (v. 12) or 'ancestors' (v. 20)—inclusive pronoun in both verses.

As for the phrase 'who gave us the well', there is certainly much truth in the consideration: "Since the well was in Samaritan territory, presumably she would use the exclusive form." Yet, the inclusive can be defended here also, I think. With the remark that Jacob and his sons drank from the well, she is pointing back to a time anterior to the present antithesis between Jew and Samaritan; the well was given to ancestors of both peoples. Moreover, she comes to fetch water from the well and Jesus hopes to quench his thirst with its water. "The well is of common interest for both you and me," she may have meant.

It seems possible to find a third appeal to higher authority in v. 25. The woman has acknowledged Jesus as a prophet, but to the Messiah even a prophet has to bow; he, the prophet, as well as she, will have to be shown all things by the Messiah. Accepting this interpretation, we again have to use the inclusive 'we'. Yet there is a difference with the verses first mentioned. In v. 12 and v. 20 the pronominal first person plural was used in phrases connected with the past; v. 25 points to the future, to the time when the Messiah will come and teach. A consciousness among the Samaritans of a Messianic belief common to both Jews and themselves is a necessary presupposition of the interpretation of v. 25 given above. So we are led to the preliminary question whether such a consciousness existed in Jesus' times. That question I am not able to decide here and now.

Mr. T. W. G. Collins, of the Africa Inland Mission, working in Kenya, East Africa, writes:

On page 88 of the April 1958 issue, under his paragraph heading on 'Humility,' Mr. R. G. Bratcher offers us some very fine advice. To me this is emphasized by the Rev. W. J. Bradnock's presentation of "Questions and Answers" referring to work being done by the

Rev. C. S. Foster, in the issue of October 1956. The practical out-working of sticking to the text to the best of our ability.

Accordingly, as I have seen no comment in the periodical yet, I venture to question the validity of the assumption made by the author of "Problems of Bible Translation," as reproduced on page 134 of the issue for July 1955, namely:

Proverbs must generally be treated in the same way (as idioms). The same thought is illustrated in a different way in different lands and should be translated by the corresponding proverb. Where an Englishman would say "Every little helps," a Frenchman would say "Little streams make big rivers."

Apart from the fact that many present-day proverbs may well prove to be transient colloquialisms, which would tend to exclude them from the Bible, one may well immediately inquire just which verses in the book of Proverbs may one deal with in this manner and where or why must the line be drawn? Even if one has up one's sleeve a proverb to match one which is to be translated, is that any reason for excluding the original saying from its place in God's holy Word?

Mr. W. H. Douglas, of the United Aborigines Mission, working among the aborigines of Western Australia, writes:

A few translations have been done for Australian tribes, but in most cases the original translators are now off the field and the successors have either not learned the languages themselves or have not encouraged literacy (i.e. vernacular reading). As far as I know, only at Hermannsburg (among the Aranta) and at Ernabella (Mark's Gospel in Pitjantjatjara) has there been much emphasis on vernacular reading.

It is heartening to report, however, that there has come a revival of interest in the vernacular approach. Of course, as the Government has forbidden vernacular education in the native schools, this work must not (at this time) be conducted amongst the children. But there are ample opportunities to promote literacy amongst the teenagers and adults. We personally are seeking to encourage a "people movement" amongst the adults, so that whole communities may turn to Christianity, making it possible for men to be released from the close-knit societies to undertake Christian training.

In a recent meeting our own mission passed the following motion: "This meeting is in full accord with the principle of language study, Bible translating and literacy work on stations where the native language is in common use and is determined that the principle shall be implemented as soon as possible . . ."

You will realize that this decision has been a great joy to us.

From Age Holter, of the Norwegian Bible Society

The observations of J. de Savignac on "The Jerusalem Bible" in the October number of *The Bible Translator* certainly serve a very

useful purpose: to alert those readers who are not informed, in order that they may not be deceived. For this reason the author gives some examples of defective translation. But to one who is using this version in his daily translation work, quite another factor seems to be outstanding, namely, the surprising objectivity and faithfulness of this translation.

Two examples may very well illustrate this. In Gal. 2:16 the translation reads: 'knowing that man is not justified by the works of law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ'. The word 'only' is not explicit in the Greek text, so the case is parallel with the former Roman Catholic charge against Luther's "falsification" in translating Rom. 3:28. From a Protestant point of view, it is now rather striking to see a Catholic translation support the basic principle of the Reformation: "justification only by faith."

In Is. 7:14 the Hebraic word '*alma*' is rendered 'a young woman', and not 'a virgin', as we should have suspected. In fact, we should realize that the prime dogma of the Roman Catholic Church is not that of the Bible, but of the church, which, as a matter of principle, is independent of the Bible. Father Lagrange, the founder of the Ecole Biblique of the French Dominicans at Jerusalem, thus declared in 1917 that only Protestants were forced to "do violence to the text" because their principle of *sola scriptura* made it necessary for them to find all their truths in the Bible. But "a Catholic can and dare believe a dogma, even if it is not given in the Scripture, as, for example, the dogma of the eternal virginity of Mary. He is not obliged to do violence to the text in order to find it there."

This explains why the Dominicans of Jerusalem do not need to be too much hampered by ecclesiological preoccupation. And so, I think that some of the examples mentioned by J. de Savignac may be a bit misleading. The translation of 1 Pet. 5:1, for example, may not be "intentional." The translation has kept the etymological meaning of the word *presbuteros* 'elder person', not in order to evade the impression that Peter only has been merely a simple priest ('an elder person as they'), but because of the contrast to the following address to 'the youths'. In quoting the note to the word 'elder persons', J. de Savignac has omitted the first sentence: "These are the *presbuteroi*," with a reference to Tit. 1:5.

Discussing the translation of Gal. 5:5, J. de Savignac points out that it is based on an interpretation which does away with all idea of a Pauline eschatological righteousness. But he has omitted the fact that there is given an alternative translation in the note, reading 'the hope of righteousness'.

As for the other examples mentioned by J. de Savignac, actually I do not disagree with his observations. (But it is noteworthy that even a Protestant translation such as that of J. B. Phillips has almost the same rendering of 1 Cor. 9:5 as *The Jerusalem Bible*, "travel with a Christian sister," and that the understanding of Mat. 19:9 is not beyond all question.) The general impression, however, is that the Bible of Jerusalem has gone a surprisingly long way to give the Catholic

layman an objective and faithful translation. As for the notes, it has certainly been a necessary duty for the translators not to contradict the interpretations which have been defined by the authority of the church. But, even with these restrictions, they have been striving for objectivity. Here are some examples.

The note to Mal. 1:10 says that the prophet has in mind the perfect sacrifice in the Messianic time, but adds expressly, "The council of Trent has made this interpretation official." The note to Mat. 16:19 says that "according to Catholic exegesis" the authority bestowed upon Peter is transferred to his successors.

But what strikes a Protestant reader more than anything else is the serious effort to make the intelligent layman familiar with the results and methods of modern Biblical research. It is especially instructive to note some of those passages which the Papal Biblical Commission once declared to be authentic.

Mark 16:9-20. *The Jerusalem Bible* has this passage in the text, but the text problem is discussed in a note, with the conclusion that these verses most likely do not belong to the Gospel of Mark.

Luke 22:43, 44. The verses are kept in the text, but with a critical note.

John 5:7, 8. The *comma johanneum* is omitted, and a note declares it to be a gloss.

The introductions to the different books of the Bible may also contribute to throw fresh light on the new era of Roman Catholic Biblical studies. The Gospel of Luke is dated at about A.D. 80, against the decision of the Papal Biblical Commission that this Gospel must have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem. The introduction to the Hebrews concludes that the author can not have been Paul, but probably Apollos. This is against the pronouncement of the Trent *Sacrosancto* and against the decision of the Papal Biblical Commission in 1914. In the introduction to the Pentateuch the theory of Graf-Wellhausen is discussed in light of modern scholarship, instead of the classical theory of different traditional strata, with a nucleus going back to the time of Moses. The decision of the Papal Biblical Commission from 1905, establishing the Mosaic origin of the whole Pentateuch, is consequently not binding. The same applies to the Psalms. The discussion of the synoptic problem and the latest attempts to solve it is a model of objective presentation.

With these few and incomplete remarks I only want to underline what J. de Savignac says himself, How grateful we ought to be for this new evidence of "the continuing liberating power of God." *The Jerusalem Bible* is really a step forward to make the Bible "a meeting place of Christians."
