

## REVIEW ARTICLE: THE LIVING BIBLE NEW TESTAMENT

Epp, Eldon Jay: "Jews and Judaism in The *Living New Testament*", in Gary A. Tuttle (ed.): *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies. Essays in honor of William Sanford LaSor*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans 1978, pp. 80-96.

The Preface to **The Living New Testament** (LNT) invited readers to submit suggestions for improvement. Eldon Jay Epp, Harkness Professor of Biblical Studies at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, has responded with an article (unfortunately too long to reprint here). Professor Epp pays tribute to LNT as "a serious and well intentioned . . . endeavour", but makes a number of criticisms under the headings of "Theological Impoverishment" and "Castigation of Judaism" in LNT. Epp's comments are based on the 1972 Meridian Book edition of LNT. Where later editions of LNT or of *The Living Bible* add a literal translation in a footnote, this is indicated in the present summary by the use of an asterisk (\*); in one case, square brackets are used to indicate a different translation adopted in the text of later editions.

In the first section of his article, Epp detects "the frequent importation of evangelical terms and revivalist clichés into the text", as for example when "righteousness of God" is translated or paraphrased "way to heaven" (Rom 3.21), or "justification" becomes "glorious life" (Rom 5.16). References to being "saved" and "lost" are added at various places to the text, The richness of "eternal life" is reduced to "get to heaven" (Mark 10.17), and "gospel" is rendered "wonderful story" (Mark 1.1) or "way to heaven" (Gal 1.6, 11; in Gal 1.6 in quotation marks). The Jewish apocalyptic background of New Testament thought, especially its concept of the two ages, is obscured or removed, for example in 1 Cor 10.11 and Luke 20.34-35. The translation of "Son of Man" is inconsistent, sometimes even between parallel passages; the eschatological dimension of the future-oriented sayings is reduced; and Jesus is presented as referring to himself in a "personal and egotistic fashion". The varied references to the cosmic spirit-world in Rom 8.38-39 are diminished by the use of such phrases as "our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow".

Already in this first section, Epp notes the unexpected translation of "elemental spirits" in Gal 4.9 as "Jewish laws" [in later editions, "God's laws"]. In the second half of the article, this is seen as part of a consistently anti-Jewish tendency. Epp, it is true, commends LNT for its use of the phrase "the Jewish leaders" "in contexts where the Fourth Gospel portrays hostility between Jesus and 'the Jews'." However, "generation", referring to Jews, is translated "nation" even in passages where it means "contemporaries of Jesus" (Matt 11.16, 12.39-45, 16.4; Luke 17.25). Phrases like "believe in him" (Jesus) in the Fourth Gospel "are turned into specific statements of belief that Jesus is Messiah" (John 6.30, 8.31, 10.42\*, 12.37, 42). LNT consistently "exonerat(es) Jesus from seemingly mistaken notions about the appearance of the eschaton in his very own generation", for example rendering Mark 13.29-30\* in such a way as to "make . . . it easy to interpret the Second Coming as imminent in *our* time". In John 11.49, Caiaphas addresses his colleagues as "you stupid idiots". Negative language about Jews is heightened, and negative references to Gentiles are sometimes eliminated (see Matt 5.47, 6.7, 18.17\*, 3 John 7).

Most seriously, in Epp's view, Judaism as a whole is characterised as "a mere legalistic system, devoid of religious substance or feeling and unworthy of respect". "The law was given through Moses", for example, becomes "Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice" (John 1.17); in Rom 7.12, Paul no longer describes the law as "holy". Epp cites various examples of Old Testament quotations presented in such a way as to become "explicit, and thereby often anachronistic, statements about Jesus Christ", or sometimes even by him. In Rom 9.33 = Is 28.16, for example, the name "Jesus" is made to seem part of the Old Testament text, and the translation of Rom 15.21 = Is 52.15 implies that Isaiah used the phrase "the name of Christ".

Epp is particularly concerned lest LNT be used by people who will not realise that it is a paraphrase. He concludes that LNT "must not be used for the exegesis of a New Testament text and it must not become the final authority for the exposition of a New Testament passage."

It is to be hoped that Professor Epp's comments will be carefully considered in future revision of *The Living Bible*.

P.E.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Delebecque, Edouard: **Evangile de Luc: texte traduit et annoté**. Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres", collection Etudes anciennes, Paris, 156 p., 96 FF.

La collection d'Etudes anciennes, éditée par "Les Belles-Lettres", vise avant tout un public universitaire et cultivé. Elle publie essentiellement des œuvres classiques, grecques et latines, en fournissant le texte original avec sa traduction en regard, une introduction et des notes plus ou moins développées. Pour la première fois un écrit du Nouveau Testament est présenté dans cette collection, et il est significatif qu'il s'agisse de l'Evangile de Luc. Un ouvrage du même auteur: "Etudes grecques sur l'Evangile de Luc", également paru en 1976 dans cette même collection, constitue un complément qu'il est important de consulter. Le texte adopté est celui de la 25<sup>e</sup> édition de Nestle-Aland avec quelques modifications signalées à la fin de l'introduction.

Comme on peut aisément le deviner, la traduction a ici un tout autre but et obéit à d'autres critères que ceux adoptés par les Sociétés Bibliques pour leur traduction en "langue courante". Le littéralisme est même souvent poussé beaucoup plus loin que dans les versions traditionnelles de la Bible. Citons pour seul exemple le fait que πνεῦμα ἁγίου est rendu par "un Esprit Saint" chaque fois que l'expression est employée sans article par Luc. Ce littéralisme est marqué par deux options principales: le choix de la théologie catholique traditionnelle comme ligne d'interprétation et la thèse que Luc est avant tout un écrivain grec, quelle que soit l'importance des sémitismes ou araméismes que l'on peut (ou croit) déceler dans ses écrits. L'importance accordée à la culture hellénique de Luc et à son expérience du grec classique se manifeste clairement dans l'annotation par les références aux auteurs grecs anciens (dont Homère qui a une place privilégiée) et par l'abondance des indications à caractère philologique. C'est dans les notes, en particulier celles portant sur les "préverbes", les aspects verbaux, les prépositions, que réside le principal intérêt