

NOTES

Kecharitōmēnē, “favoured” (Luke 1.28), and the Italian Common Language New Testament (“Parola del Signore”)

The text of Luke 1.28 is well-known. It contains the words of the angel to Mary: “Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee . . .” (King James Version); “Hail, O favoured one . . .” (Revised Standard Version).

The most famous Latin translation, of St. Jerome, reads: *Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum* . . . (“Hail, woman full of grace, the Lord is with you”), and a great many later translations have been influenced by it. So nearly all the Italian Roman Catholic editions of the Gospel say: *Ti saluto, piena di grazia, il Signore e con te* . . . However the Italian protestant versions have avoided the formula *piena di grazia* (“full of grace”). This expression does not seem to be the best translation of the Greek, and it implies an interpretation which can easily be confessional: the words *piena di grazia* could be understood as a description of Mary almost independent from God, whereas the Greek word *kecharitōmēnē* is a passive form. For this reason we read *Ben ti sia, o favorita; il Signore sia teo* . . . (old Diodati version) or *Ti saluto, o favorita dalla grazia, il Signore e teo* . . . (Riveduta version), in which *favorita* (“favoured one”) is preferred as the equivalent of *kecharitōmēnē*.

Unfortunately, the word *favorita* doesn't belong at all to the common language Italian of today; and the reader who knows it probably gets the wrong shade of meaning and wrong connotations from it. The same thing is true of other participles and adjectives: *graziata, gratificata, graziosa* . . . so the Italian translators of “Parola del Signore” decided to bring in the subject (God) which is hidden in the passive Greek form; and they produced the formula *Dio ti ha colmata di grazia* (“God has filled you with grace”). There was no confessional difficulty with this expression; on the contrary, the agreement was general. In addition, they thought that these words of the angel would become much clearer if the expression which follows in Greek, *il Signore è con te* (“the Lord is with you”), was placed before it.

The result was:

Ti saluto, Maria! Il Signore è con te; egli ti ha colmata di grazia (“Hail, Mary! The Lord is with you; he has filled you with grace”). In this way a biblical text which up to now has been almost a test of the confessional character of Italian translators, took on a new form and became a new point of unity: now there is a faithful translation of the Greek text which is common to all Italian Christians.

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