

MARTYRIA IĒSOU REVISITED

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1. Two exponents of the objective genitive

In a recent essay Petros Vassiliadis discusses the translation of *martyria iēsou* in the Book of Revelation.¹ He accepts that the problem of determining whether the genitive is objective or subjective is best solved exegetically.² Accordingly his concern is “with the exegetical aspect of the phrase . . . and thus with the semantic development of the word group *martyria-martyrein-martyrs*”.³

After a brief analysis in both fields he concludes that in Revelation the expression *martyria iēsou* always

has a clear martyrological nuance, and means “witness (unto death) to Jesus” (objective genitive). *Martyria* in Revelation is thus in the final stage of becoming a technical term—a process completed by the time of Origen, who defined *martyrs* in the same way as the English “martyr” . . .⁴

Vassiliadis therefore suggests that the closing clause in Rev 19.10 should be translated, “‘What inspires the prophets is that they can witness (even unto death) to Jesus’.”⁵

In a slightly earlier essay G. W. H. Lampe also discusses this “perplexing verse”.⁶ He surveys the conclusions of ancient and modern exegetes, noting that many of the latter take the genitive as subjective, with 1 Tim 6.13 in view.⁷ But he rejects the subjective on contextual grounds:

The great vision has reached its climax, and the central theme of the vision is the struggle to the death . . . between the spiritual powers represented by faithful witness to Jesus and . . . by the worship of the Beast . . . The angel is not talking . . . about a “life of witness to Jesus,” but about the crisis of persecution—the choice between confessing Christ in the face of death of apostatizing . . . Nor is the angel making . . . a general observation that prophets proclaim the mind of Christ. As the angel is speaking, the last battle is about to begin and the Beast and his false prophet are about to be cast alive into a lake of fire. It would scarcely be a time for him to offer the theological comment, however true in itself, that the Spirit communicates through prophets “the truth revealed by Jesus.”⁸

¹ “The Translation of *Martyria iēsou* in Revelation”. *The Bible Translator*, vol. 36(1), 1985, 129–34.

² *Ibid.*, 129, 130.

³ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁶ “The Testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy (Rev 19.10)”. In W. C. Weinrich (ed.): *The New Testament Age: Essays in Honor of Bo Reicke*, vol. 1. Macon: Mercer University Press 1984, 245–258. The quotation comes from 245.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 245–9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 249, 250.

Lampe is no happier with appeals to 1 Tim 6.13, for he equates Jesus' confession with his simple dialogue with Pilate at his trial.⁹ But

it is difficult to see how this *ἁπολογία* of Jesus could be identified with the Spirit of prophecy which inspires confessors . . . Jesus is the archetypal martyr, but the prophetic Spirit is surely inspiring confessors to bear their testimony to him, not to repeat such testimony as he was believed to have uttered at his trial.¹⁰

In fact, they must confess Jesus, not deny him, in the face of persecution, even death,¹¹ and none are exempt. "Those who maintain testimony to Jesus' and are inspired to do so by the Spirit of prophecy (19.10) are not a special 'order' of prophets, but, ideally, include all Christian people."¹² Indeed, "The witnessing Christian is thus an inspired prophet."¹³

2. The testimony of *martyrs*.

The above arguments are both based on the clear fact that many a *martyr* in Revelation was slain for his faith.¹⁴ However, the pathway to an objective genitive does not appear so certain. Both exegeses of the closing clause of 19.10 are therefore open to question. I have explored the topic elsewhere against a broader background,¹⁵ but a salient summary must suffice here.

Martyrs appears in Revelation five times in all,¹⁶ though nothing more can be gleaned from 2.13 than the grim fact of slaughter. More on the point shortly, since it is not paramount. Far more informative is 11.3, whose *dyo martyres* are clearly prophets. For *prophēteuein* defines their task in the same verse, along with *prophēteia*, v. 6, and *prophētēs*, v. 10. This invites the nexus, *martyrs* equals *prophētēs*. The context strongly supports the linguistic evidence. Vv. 5,6 compare the powers of the *martyres* to those of the prophets Elijah and Moses,¹⁷ even as the false prophet in the unholy trinity they battle apes the power of Elijah.¹⁸ At the human level the very essence of that battle is that *Hoi dyo prophētai ebasanisan tous katoikountas epi tēs gēs*, 11.10. The only other comparable contexts for the potent verb *basanizein* are those of 9.5; 14.10. The use of the cognate noun *basanismos* bears close comparison.¹⁹ So does that of *plēgē*, 11.6, whose close relationship with the complex is clear.²⁰ I have argued elsewhere that this is sound evidence in identifying the pericope in view as portraying John's own prophetic role. He is heaven's agent on earth to punish God's enemies through the very process of prophesying.²¹

⁹ *Ibid.*, 250–3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 253–8.

¹² *Ibid.*, 254.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 255. Lampe's wider NT evidence is secondary to internal evidence.

¹⁴ Vassiliadis, *art. cit.*, 132 and Lampe, *art. cit.*, 253 briefly canvass the evidence, as I do below.

¹⁵ *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Aberdeen 1986, especially 359–366.

¹⁶ 1.5; 2.13; 3.14; 11.3; 17.6.

¹⁷ Cf. 2 Kgs 1.10, 12; 1 Kgs 17.1; Ex 7.17–21.

¹⁸ Rev 13.13 (cf. 1 Kgs 18.38); 16.13, 14; 19.20.

¹⁹ Especially in 9.5; 14.11. But cf. Babylon's punishment, 18.7, 10, 15.

²⁰ See 18.4, 8. Applied to humans in 9.18, 20; 15.1, 6, 8; 16.9, 21; 18.4; 21.9; 22.18.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, 372–380.

In 17.6 *martyres Iēsou* leads to the same nexus, though more implicitly. The stress here is upon martyrdom in no uncertain terms. This readily identifies *martys* as *prophētēs*. For the just punishment of those who shed the *haima hagiōn kai prophētōn* is portrayed in 16.6. The same phrase, albeit reversed, highlights Babylon's guilt in 18.24. It is noteworthy that *hagioi* and *prophētai* are carefully distinguished from martyrs in general. Martyrdom is the theme yet again in 17.6, with mystic Babylon the tyrant once more. Yet the clearest possible distinction is made even before *hagioi* and *martyres*. Here both nouns separately qualify the repeated *ek tou haimatos*. Obviously, therefore, *hagioi* retains its specific identity in all three verses, while *martyres* in 17.6 equates with *prophētai* alone in the other two. The wider circle of Christians deserves further comment, however. More on this later.

Finally, *martys* twice applies directly to Christ. Some exegetes²² conclude that his earthly, salvific ministry is in view in 1.5. But this is to miss one of John's most brilliant subtleties. As I have shown elsewhere,²³ he is fond of preliminary allusions. For example, *to thērion* bursts forcefully upon the scene in 11.7. Yet no explanation is offered till ch. 13. In 1.4,5 *ho martys* keeps trinitarian company with two expressions, both classic examples of preliminary allusion. The Father is called *ho ōn kai ho ēn kai ho erchomenos*. This curious epithet presages imminent eschatological judgment.²⁴ Equally cryptically the Spirit is labelled *ta hepta pneumata*. This refers to the Spirit's paramount revelational role in the ministry of the prophet John.²⁵ It is to be expected, therefore, that *ho martys* is equally a preliminary allusion. A study of the cognate verb will shortly confirm the fact. This does not necessarily designate Christ as a prophet. But John's primary focus is certainly his source of prophetic revelation in Christ.²⁶

At first sight 3.14 yields little to the discussion. It is no coincidence, however, that the pair of select adjectives, *pistos kai alēthinos*, occurs just four times, twice with reference to Christ, 3.14; 19.11, and twice with reference to the prophetic words of God, 21.5; 22.6. It is noteworthy, too, that Christ is called *logos tou theos*, 19.13, as the relevant discussion will confirm. So 3.14 concurs with 1.5 that, even when applied to Christ, *martys* has a clear prophetic nuance.²⁷ Conversely, this nuance belies the seeming nexus, *martys* equals martyr, which could readily be inferred from other applications. Those of the cognate verb will shortly confirm the fact. The paramount stress of *martys* is therefore prophetic, not martyrological, despite the prominence of the latter.

²² E.g., D'Aragnon, Beasley-Murray, Farrer, Kraft, Rist.

²³ *Op. cit.*, 420.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 334, 335.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 353, 354. Detrimentally, Vassiliadis takes no account of *pneuma*.

²⁶ The rest of vv. 5, 6 certainly outline Jesus' salvific work. It is a simple step from here to the common perception of *martys*. But v. 7 pictures his punitive Parousia. Vv. 5, 6 point to this pervasive motif of Rev (cf. fn. 48). Similarly, only through his salvific work could the Lamb qualify to open the scroll which ensures the saint's inheritance, 5.1-10. This total picture is in John's mind when he designates Jesus as *martys*. The common perception is somewhat restricted in this light.

²⁷ It is difficult to see how the salvific nuance could fit the context of 3.14. The threat of eschatological judgment is heightened by *estēka epi tēn thyran*, v.20. This seems to echo Jas 5.9, which implies a most imminent Parousia.

3. The testimony of *martyrein*

Martyrein offers further compelling evidence that the primary focus of the complex is prophetic. The verb occurs four times in all,²⁸ once in the book's prologue and three times in its epilogue. Not only are these pericopes parallel, but both also emphasize its prophetic genre. The evidence is far more extensive than meets the eye.²⁹ But even the patent facts are very convincing. For example, 1.3 describes Revelation as *tous logous tēs prophēteias*. More comprehensively still, 22.7, 10, 18 designate it *tous logous tēs prophēteias tou bibliou toutou*. V. 19 is just as sweeping, though the qualifying phrases are reversed: *tou bibliou tēs prophēteias tautēs*. It is very difficult to suggest how John could more forcefully label every word of his book as prophecy.

It follows, then, that *martyrein* equates with *prophēteuein* in Revelation. In his prophetic prologue John says in essence that *emartyrēsen . . . hosa eiden* 1.2. Were confirmation required that he has the entire prophetic book in mind, one need but note that he applies *idein* a further fifty-four times throughout in fulfilling Christ's command, 1.19. The prologue also shows John's place in the chain of prophetic revelation from God through Christ and the angel, v. 1. Accordingly, the same intermediaries, Christ and his angel, are in mind in John's prophetic epilogue, 22.16.³⁰ So *martyrein* certainly applies here to the angel's task of revealing prophecy. Similarly it implies Christ's higher revelational role in v. 20. The simple *tauta*, connoting the entire contents of Revelation,³¹ succinctly confirms the fact. Even v. 18 offers no cause for construing the verb otherwise. Indeed, its stern warning is patently prophetic, and the precise obverse of the blessing of 1.3.

This no more suggests that Jesus is a prophet than *martyrs* does in 1.5; 3.14, despite the angel's concession in 19.10; 22.9. But Jesus' role in mediating prophecy is certainly in view. The verb therefore applies consistently to John's prophetic task, either in revelation or in proclamation. This belies the seeming nexus, *martyrs* equals martyr. Any prophet in Revelation certainly faced martyrdom. John expected the same fate himself, if my understanding of 11. 1–10 is correct.³² But his revealing angel had no such thought whatever. By no means, either, is this the focus when Jesus is the subject, despite any possible ambiguity with the noun. On this ground alone the major conclusions of both Vassiliadis and Lampe appear to falter.

4. The testimony of *martyria*

Martyria, the noun of most current interest, may now be more readily understood as John intended. It occurs nine times in all, three times unqualified,³³ and six times in the expression *martyria Iēsou*.³⁴ As already

²⁸ 1.2; 22.16, 18, 20.

²⁹ See my *op. cit.*, especially 321–325, 351, 352.

³⁰ Regarding *hymīn*, see fn. 56.

³¹ Cf. 8 (*bis*), 16. The repeated *meta tauta*, 1.19; 4.1; 7.9; 9.12; 15.5; 18.1; 19.1; 20.3, adds further confirmation. Cf. *meta touto*, 7.1.

³² See fn. 21.

³³ 6.9; 11.7; 12.11.

³⁴ 1.2, 9; 12.17; 19.10 (*bis*); 20.4.

observed, 11.7 invites the nexus, *martyria* equals *prophēteia*. It is best to defer the analysis of 6.9 until *logos tou theou* is discussed. However, the theme of martyrdom already allows the distinct possibility that prophets are chiefly in view. This allows the possibility in 12.11 as well, though a wider group is involved since *nikan* cannot be restricted to prophets.³⁵ Nevertheless, *psychē* in a sanguine context links the verb firmly to 6.9 and 20.4 alike. The prophetic stress of both will soon be apparent. Similarly *adelphoi*, which is relatively rare in Revelation,³⁶ forges a solid link between 12.10 and 6.11, quite apart from the common theme of martyrdom. For in 12.10 a heavenly voice proclaims its fraternity with Satan's earthly victims. This particular fraternity recurs only in 19.10; 22.9, where *adelphoi* are indeed *prophētai*. The latter passages are both linked to 6.11 as well by the still rarer *syndoulos*, which appears these three times alone. In its own right, therefore, *martyria* clearly connotes prophetic proclamation, though John's references to a wider circle still require clarification.³⁷

Martyria Iēsou, the expression in question, leads even more decisively to the same consistent conclusion. In 1.2, along with *logos tou theou* it is the direct object of *martyrein*. This alone suggests that *martyria* equates with *prophēteia*. But there is far more evidence than this. I have shown elsewhere that *logos tou theou*, and even *logos* alone, connote John's stress upon God-inspired prophecy.³⁸ It must suffice here to note that he explains *logos tou theou* by *hosa eiden*, 1.2, or the entire Book of Revelation, as noted above. Further, it is by no means coincidental that the expression occurs in a passage stressing the chain of revelation whose source is God. *Martyria Iēsou* is equally defined by *hosa eiden*. Thus it is simply another designation for Revelation, but a most carefully chosen one. For the pericope also stresses Christ as God's principal intermediary in prophetic revelation. Just as *logos tou theou* stresses God's role in the process, so also *martyria Iēsou* stresses Christ's. Consequently the two expressions frequently appear together.³⁹

In 1.9 John offers them as the reason for his exile. As such they contribute little to the discussion. More helpful is 12.17, where *entolē* replaces the customary *logos*, though the emphasis may be different.⁴⁰ Nevertheless *tērein*, to be considered shortly, builds a cogent bridge to other prophetic pericopes, especially 1.3; 22.7,9. The implication of martyrdom serves the same purpose. The fact of martyrdom speaks eloquently in 20.4 as well, where the standard appositional pair appears for the last time. Clearly, though, the group is not restricted to prophets.

Martyria Iēsou appears twice in 19.10, finally, and here the evidence is decisive. John's revealing angel identifies himself: *syndoulos sou eimi kai tōn adelphōn sou tōn echontōn tēn martyrian Iēsou*. In 22.9, a passage precisely parallel, this angel repeats these exact words with one relevant change. The participial expression becomes simply, *tōn prophētōn*. The obvious inference is

³⁵ See 2.7, 11, 17, 26; 3.5, 12, 21; 15.2; 21.7.

³⁶ 1.9; 6.11; 12.10; 19.10; 22.9.

³⁷ §6 will elucidate how this applies to Christians in general.

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, 357-359.

³⁹ 1.2, 9; 20.4. Cf. 6.9.

⁴⁰ See fn. 62.

that *martyria Iēsou* equates with *prophēteia*, even though the second passage broadens the group.

19.10 concludes with the angel's enigmatic definition, *hē . . . martyria Iēsou estin to pneuma tēs prophēteias*. John's general intent is clear enough, but the details prove problematic. Commentators typically offer two broad alternatives. On the one hand R. H. Mounce prefers the meaning, "the message attested by Jesus is the essence of prophetic proclamation".⁴¹ But this is most unlikely. I have argued elsewhere that *pneuma* is a key term in John's prophetic vocabulary.⁴² It cannot assume so banal a nuance as essence in so significant a verse as 19.10. On the other, therefore, many exegetes accept that the Spirit is intended. Yet they sometimes speak with muted conviction. For example, J.-L. D'Aragnon suggests that "This difficult expression seems to mean that God's word, as revealed and attested by Jesus . . . continues to be heard in the Church, thanks to the action of the Spirit . . . speaking by the lips of the prophets".⁴³

Such hesitance is natural. It is difficult to equate an impersonal *martyria* with a personal *pneuma*, as the angelic definition demands. It would make more apparent sense were the complement *hē prophēteia tou pneumatos*. But John's work never need be done for him. The key to his tantalizing enigma is his strenuous effort to present himself as a neo-classical prophet. The evidence is far too pervasive to canvass here.⁴⁴ The relevant fact is that he employs one of the most characteristic features of classical prophetic proclamation, the messenger formula.⁴⁵ In Revelation it takes the form *tade legei*, as Jesus addresses each of the seven churches personally.⁴⁶ John also orders that his prophecy be read aloud to his flock, 1.3.⁴⁷ Despite his exile on a lonely island, he thus imitates the public proclamation of his OT exemplars.

Martyria is therefore far less impersonal than appears. It is virtually the personal testimony of Jesus. This is also an attractive explanation of his name, *logos tou theou*, 19.13. Its eschatological pericope is not only the watershed of the book,⁴⁸ but also the fulfilment of many of the allusions in Jesus' address to the churches. Of particular note are his many threats of punitive Parousia,⁴⁹ when his chief weapon will be his *rhomphaia distomos oxeia*.⁵⁰ But *martyria* is equally the personal testimony of the Spirit, for each "letter" concludes with Jesus' designation, *ti to pneuma legei*.⁵¹ In fact, whenever John is in vision he is *en*

⁴¹ *The Book of Revelation*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott 1978, 342.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, 352–356.

⁴³ "The Apocalypse". In R. E. Brown *et al.* (eds.): *The Jerome Bible Commentary*, vol. 2. London: Geoffrey Chapman 1968, 489.

⁴⁴ See my *op. cit.*, especially ch. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 98–100, 380.

⁴⁶ 2.1, 8, 12, 18; 3.1, 7, 14.

⁴⁷ *Anaginōskein*. Many modern translations lack force here.

⁴⁸ John mentions the Parousia repeatedly, and always as the event in which the wicked suffer God's ultimate wrath. See 1.7; 6.12–17; 11.15–19; 14.14–20; 16.17–21. Thereafter the saints enjoy the bliss of the new creation. In 19.11 begins a section of Revelation with relatively linear chronology, as the new age sweeps smoothly from the Parousia. This passage is therefore the consummate watershed of the entire book.

⁴⁹ 2.5, 16; 3.3. Implicit contextually in 2.25; 3.20. Cf. fn. 27.

⁵⁰ 1.16. Cf. 2.12, 16; 19.15, 21.

⁵¹ 2.7, 11, 17, 29; 3.6, 13, 22.

pneumati.⁵² G. R. Beasley-Murray also reminds us that the Jewish “favourite name for the Spirit of God was precisely ‘the Spirit of prophecy’.”⁵³ However, John seems to shift the emphasis from the Spirit himself to his personal testimony through prophecy. The closing clause of 19.10 may therefore be paraphrased, “prophecy is inspired by Jesus and the Spirit alike, and is their personal testimony when proclaimed”.⁵⁴

5. Subjective genitive

The above evidence strongly attests that in *martyria Iēsou* the genitive is subjective. But the conclusion is important enough to warrant still closer attention. The expression is in apposition to *logos tou theou* and almost always accompanies it. The two genitives must therefore be identical in type. *Tou theou* is clearly subjective, as it is repeatedly in other expressions in Revelation.⁵⁵ *Iēsou* must likewise be subjective. This is confirmed in 12.17; 19.10, where the expression is the object of *echein*. So trite a verb scarcely inspires confidence that a confession concerning Christ is intended. The task calls for nothing less, for example, than *kēryssein*. But *echein* is quite adequate if *martyria Iēsou* connotes John’s prophetic book. *Tērein* will add its testimony in a moment. *Echein* features again in 6.9, where the antecedent of its object *hēn* is the unqualified *martyria*. The sense is precisely the same as *martyria Iēsou*, however, since it is still in apposition to *logos tou theou*, and in a sanguine context at that.

6. The wider circle of Christians

At many points in his book, even within the confines of the current topic, John portrays a wide circle of saints. Are they all meant to be prophets, testifying to Christ as Lampe suggests? John is not the only prophet in Revelation,⁵⁶ though he discloses little of the others’ ministry. But we have noticed that *prophētai* are carefully distinguished from the total count of Christians in some sanguine contexts. Lampe’s case could be dismissed at this were it not for one fact. In at least two other similar passages *martyria* is just as embracing as martyrdom. *Martyria* is not therefore confined to prophets alone.

In 6.9–11 the souls of those slain *dia ton logon tou theou kai dia tēn martyrian hēn eichon* call upon God to avenge their blood. The perfect foil is 19.2, the only other place where *ekdikein* occurs. Here the *douloi*⁵⁷ are the full complement of martyrs in the proximate 18.24. So all of these, not just the prophets, had *martyrian*. The same group is in view in 20.4, with *psychē logos tou theou*, and

⁵² 1.10; 4.2; 17.3; 21.10.

⁵³ *The Book of Revelation*. London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 3rd ed. 1981, 276.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, the verse is prefaced by the angel’s assurance, *houtoi hoi logoi alēthinoi tou theou eisin*, v. 9. For the first time in the book are brought together all the participants in prophetic revelation, God, Jesus, the Spirit, the angel, and John.

⁵⁵ E.g., 2.18; 7.15 (22.1, 3); 16.14. In fact, there seems to be no sound reason for a single objective genitive in the total of more than 40 cases.

⁵⁶ See 22.6.9.16 (*hymn*) especially. The *dyo martyres* of ch. 11 may also be relevant, though John’s own ministry is paramount here, fn. 21. Cf. fn. 57.

⁵⁷ The noun appears 14 times, but only four times is the nuance patently prophetic, 1.1. (second); 10.7; 11.18; 15.3. 1.1 (first); 22.6 are ambiguous, though *deiknyein* (1.1; 4.1; 17.1; 21.9, 10; 22.1, 6, 8) signals prophetic revelation.

martyria (Iēsou) the obvious links with 6.9. A further line of evidence leads to the wider circle of Christians as well. These candidates for the benign resurrection *ou prosekynēsan to thērion oude tēn eikona autou kai ouk elabon to charagma epi to metōpon kai epi tēn cheira autōn*.⁵⁸ The death threat which triggered such resistance was universal, 13. 15–17. So was heaven's stern warning, 14.9–12. Again, all believers therefore had *martyrian*.

I have already suggested that *echein* does not connote *prophēteuein*. *Logon tēs martyrias autōn*, 12.11, does not fulfil promising appearances either. It is simpler, and more in accord with comparable passages, to see this as an abbreviated form of *Logon tou theou kai martyrian Iēsou* than as a circumlocution for proclamation. Both expressions connote John's entire book of prophecy, and *echein* applies to it in two different senses. The prophet himself receives it by revelation. Other believers receive it by proclamation—the prophet's, not their own. Hence the frequent *akouein*.⁵⁹ *Terein* speaks to the same theme. In 1.3; 22.7,9 all believers are urged to keep the words of John's prophecy, just as they keep God's commandments, 12.17; 14.12. This is not proclamation but obedience. Their only safety is in heeding God's prophetic guidance in a time of dire crisis.⁶⁰ John is heaven's agent on earth, not only to punish God's enemies by the very process of prophesying, but also thereby to preserve the saints.⁶¹ In this light my paraphrase of 19.10 should scarcely attract Lampe's contextual objection.

7. Conclusion

The arguments of both Vassiliadis and Lampe are based upon the picture of pervasive martyrdom John paints in Revelation. Both conclude that *martyrs* connotes martyr, and that in *martyria Iēsou* the genitive is objective. Despite minor variations, both therefore believe that the stress in 19.10 is upon witness to Jesus even to the point of death. But all such conclusions are difficult to accept. *Martyrs* does not always denote martyr. Rather, the consistent nuance of every relevant member of the complex⁶² is prophetic. In particular, *martyria Iēsou*, in apposition to *logos tou theou*, signifies John's entire prophetic book. For their own spiritual survival the saints must heed it as the personal testimony of Jesus, the living voice of the Spirit.

How, then, should we translate the closing clause of 19.10? This depends on the type of translation. At one extreme a literal translation will attempt no explication. The New International Version offers a classic example: "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." At the other, some paraphrase such as I have suggested may be considered. But this is surely not to be

⁵⁸ A second group may be in view, so this evidence must be used cautiously.

⁵⁹ 1.3; 2.7, 11, 17, 29; 3.3, 6, 13, 20, 22; 13.9; 22.17, 18.

⁶⁰ This is no denial of righteousness by faith, which John understands well, 1.5, 6; 5.6, 9, 10; 7.14; 14.3, 4; 21.6; 22.17. But one need only read the seven "letters" to see how serious Christ is about consequent life-style. Cf. fn. 62.

⁶¹ My fuller analysis referenced in fn. 21 covers this aspect as well. But briefly, John's unique "symbolic acts", 11.1, 2, signify preserving God's true worshippers in the midst of persecution.

⁶² *Martyrion*, 15.5, is a technical term referring to the sanctuary as the depository of the Decalogue. Cf. *Kibōtos tēs diathēkēs*, 11.19. This has great significance in Revelation's judgment motif. See my *op. cit.*, 437–438.

encouraged. It is part of John's consummate genius to write cryptically at every turn, yet create a literary masterpiece of surpassing splendour. It would certainly run foul of his obvious intent were every question resolved in translation. In any case consistency would be quite impossible. How, for example, does a translator explain the riddle of 666 in 13.18, or preliminary allusions like *ho òn kai ho èn kai ho erchomenos*, 1.4? I am not suggesting that Revelation remain hidden from all but the wise. It is *apokalypsis*. But the task of unravelling John's conscious enigmas is not the translator's. Such details find their proper place in footnotes and introductory material. In 19.10 all that the translator need decide is whether the genitive is subjective or objective. With the evidence in mind he may then state it simply, the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.

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EQUIVALENT DYNAMICS: FOR WHOM DO I TRANSLATE?

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The term "dynamic equivalence" has caused me much consternation from the time that I first learned of it. Somehow, I have always had the feeling that I believe more in the virtues of a dynamically equivalent translation than did those who were developing and promoting the theory. The term was introduced to me as a contrast to a phrase which defines a contrary approach, i.e., formal correspondence. The frequent juxtaposition of these expression created for me a false impression. I thought for quite sometime that the two approaches differed only in whether it was the *form* or the *dynamics* of the source text which were being emulated in the translation.

Formal correspondence recognizes that each source text has a particular form and that the goal is for the target language text to duplicate that form as closely as possible. I, therefore, inferred by analogy that each source text has a particular dynamic and the goal of a dynamically equivalent translation was to instill just that dynamic into the target text. If the one sought to translate using corresponding forms, the other sought to employ equivalent dynamics.

I began to realize my error upon hearing and reading criticisms of translations that were "not sufficiently dynamic". These evaluations were not expounded in reference to any particular dynamic of the source text. Instead they assumed some ideal concept of dynamic that is equally applicable to all texts. I saw that dynamic equivalence really meant "dynamic and equivalent", i.e., dynamic in reference to the target language, and SEMANTICALLY equivalent in reference to the original meaning of the source text. Evidently, I was not the only one confused by the term "dynamic equivalence", for many