

text, though naturally more can be got out of examining the whole question in the original Greek. Two hours' basic study is necessary to master the Introductory pages of any critical Greek Testament and some reference back will be necessary after that, but it will be seen that the critical apparatus can give the key to many of the differences between translations in English or in other languages—some of which are quite important.

### 9. For Further Study

No very recent general work on Textual Criticism has appeared in English, but for a start those interested should look at J. H. Greenlee—*Introduction to NT Textual Criticism*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964, or (much fuller) B. M. Metzger—*The Text of the New Testament*, 2nd. edition, Oxford 1968.

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## THE TRANSLATION OF *MARTYRIA IĒSOU* IN REVELATION

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### 1. *The Problem*

The Book of Revelation contains some mysterious expressions and figures, but as a whole, it is not a difficult book to translate. If the translator knows how to tackle commonplace Hebraisms, special apocalyptic expressions, and even grammatical mistakes, he will have almost no difficulty in carrying out his task. Almost, but not quite. There are a few cases where it is difficult to make up one's mind with certainty; and one such case is the phrase *martyria Iēsou* or *martyria Iēsou Christou*.

I met this problem in working as a member of the team responsible for a common language translation of the New Testament into modern Greek. I discovered that it was not at all clear whether *martyria Iēsou* is "the testimony of Jesus", or "testimony to Jesus"; in other words, whether the genitive *Iēsou* is subjective or objective.

### 2. *The Genitive Case in the New Testament*

In very many languages, cases are used to express what Nida has called "relations between events and the entities which participate in these events"<sup>1</sup>. In New Testament Greek, genitives create the most difficulties. The text is so full of

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Nida, *Componential Analysis of Meaning*, The Hague 1975, 27; cf. J. M. Anderson, *The Grammar of Case*, Cambridge 1971; J. P. Galbert, "Modality and Case Grammar", in *Working Papers in Linguistics* 10, Ohio 1971, 85-132; C. J. Fillmore, "The Case for Case", in E. Bach and R. Harms (ed.), *Universals in Linguistic Theory*, New York 1967, 1-88; R. Jakobsen, "Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre", in *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague* 6, 1936, 249-288.

them that, as N. Turner put it, the "attempt to define too narrowly the various types of genitive is vain"<sup>2</sup>—a statement which, if somewhat exaggerated, contains the essential truth of the matter. In relation to God or Christ, the genitive often expresses that ill-defined relationship which A. Deissmann called "mystical"<sup>3</sup>. Yet the problem which this poses for Bible translators has not been fully examined. Only two articles in **The Bible Translator** have ever dealt with it, and both of these were in the first issue<sup>4</sup>.

Every time the translator meets this problem, he has to ask whether the relation is directed outwards from the noun in the genitive (in this case *Iēsou*), or the other way round; in other words, whether or not the action implied by the independent noun is carried out by the participant to which the noun in the genitive refers. This is not always clear. There is no grammatical rule which can help the translator: to quote N. Turner again, "in Greek the distinction between objective and subjective genitive is a question entirely of exegesis"<sup>5</sup>. Without making an absolute distinction between linguistics and exegesis, I incline to give priority to exegesis, if only because in hellenistic *koinē*, the common language in which the New Testament was written, grammar, syntax and word meaning had already lost much of their earlier value and function.

We are therefore concerned in this article with the exegetical aspect of the phrase *martyria Iēsou*, and thus with the semantic development of the word group *martyria—martyrein—martyrs*. In Revelation, the phrase occurs six times (1.2,9; 12.17; 19.10 twice; 20.4), out of nine occurrences of the term *martyria* (see also 6.9; 11.7; 12.11).

### 3. *The phrase martyria Iēsou in modern translations and New Testament lexica*

TEV 4th edition renders the phrase in all six cases by "the truth revealed by Jesus"; so in the French and Spanish common language translations: *la vérité révélée par Jésus-Christ, . . . confirmada/proclamada por Jesucristo*; the genitive *Iēsou* was understood as subjective. This may be how some other translators understood it also, but in such literal translations as the French *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible* (TOB)<sup>6</sup> and *Bible de Jérusalem*, the phrase "*témoignage de Jésus Christ*" ("witness of Jesus Christ") does not make this clear.

The German common language translation follows the same line, except that in 20.4 it shifts to the objective genitive: "*weil sie öffentlich für Jesus und das Wort Gottes eintraten.*" So does the Italian common language translation: *perché si erano messi dalla parte di Gesù* ("because they were sent from Jesus"). In general, all modern common language translations seem to follow either the English or the German pattern. To my knowledge, only NEB takes the phrase each time as "testimony to Jesus". The only exception is 1.2, where the text has "testimony of Jesus", and a note gives "testimony to Jesus"<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> N. Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. III, *Syntax*, Edinburgh 1963, 212.

<sup>3</sup> A. Deissmann, *Paulus*, Tübingen, 2nd ed. 1925, 126.

<sup>4</sup> J. H. Greenlee, "The Genitive Case in the New Testament", in *The Bible Translator* 1, 1950, 68-70; E. A. Nida, "Equivalents of the Genitive in other Languages", *ibid.* 70-80.

<sup>5</sup> Turner, *op. cit.* 207.

<sup>6</sup> See, however, the note on 1.2.

<sup>7</sup> The RSV renders 12.17, 20.4 as objective, and the rest as subjective.

It is a remarkable fact that early in this century, at least in English-speaking circles, *martyria Iēsou* was generally understood as an objective genitive. This is shown by E. A. Abbott's *Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*<sup>8</sup>. Even Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (English edition by W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich) takes 1.2,9 as subjective, and the other cases as objective<sup>9</sup>. However, with the publication of H. Strathmann's contribution to Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, especially in its English edition<sup>10</sup>, more and more scholars were let to believe that the genitive *Iēsou* was subjective.

#### 4. *The semantic development of the martyria terminology*

As already mentioned, a solution of this problem lies through an examination of the exegetical and semantic aspects of *martyria* and its derivatives<sup>11</sup>. Originally this word-group referred to *witness to facts* in the legal sense, on the basis of personal acquaintance and recollection<sup>12</sup>. Gradually, however, the concept of witness, at least in the Old Testament, acquired a religious significance, referring not merely to the establishment of events, relations, or facts of experience, but also to the *proclamation of views or truths* of which the *martyrs* was convinced<sup>13</sup>. From factual witness, *martyria* became an evangelistic confession. This is what distinguishes *martyria* from *homologia*. Every *martyria* is a *homologia*, but every *homologia* is not a *martyria*<sup>14</sup>. Most of the 27 occurrences in John's Gospel denote an evangelistic witness to Christ's nature and significance, calling for faith<sup>15</sup>. Strathmann went even further: he pointed out, though in a footnote, that "the point of *martyria* is that believers should be won<sup>16</sup>."

From the period, however, in which the fourth gospel was written, there are indications of another significant change in the meaning of the *martyria* terminology. At least as early as Clement of Rome, a Christian was called *martyrs* because he had been put to death<sup>17</sup>. By the time of *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, the *martyria* terminology was firmly and beyond doubt associated exclusively with the concept of martyrdom<sup>18</sup>.

It is in this development that our problem lies. The question is whether the development toward the martyrological conception had already started in the New Testament itself. If we translate *martyria Iēsou* as a subjective genitive, "the

<sup>8</sup> Edinburgh 1960, 279.

<sup>9</sup> Chicago 1957, 494.

<sup>10</sup> *Martyrs, martyreō* etc., in TDNT (Eerdmans, 1967) IV.474-514, especially 500-502.

<sup>11</sup> On the semantic development of the *martyria* terminology, see E. Burnier, *Le notion de témoignage dans le Nouveau Testament. Notes de théologie biblique*, Lausanne 1937; A. A. Trites, *The New Testament Concept of Witness*, Cambridge 1977; F. Kattenbusch, "Der Märtyrertitel", *ZNTW* 4 (1903), 111-127; K. Holl, "Der ursprüngliche Sinn des Namens Märtyrer", *Neue Jahrbücher des Klassischen Altertums* 37 (1916), 253-259; Strathmann *art. cit.* 474ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 476ff.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* 478ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 497n. 63.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. J. Beutler, *Martyria. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Zeugnisthema bei Johannes*, Frankfurt a.M. 1972; W. Grundmann, *Zeugnis und Gestalt des Johannesevangeliums*, Stuttgart 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Strathmann, *art. cit.* 497n. 63.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. 5.4,7.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. 1.1; 2.2; 13.2; 14.2; 15.2; 16.2; 17.1,3; 19.1.

witness of Jesus”, then we must relate it to “the word of God” (1.2,9; 6.9; 20.4) or to “the commands of God” (12.17), making them refer to the same thing; this is what Strathmann did<sup>19</sup>. If, however, we believe that a reference to martyrdom was already beginning, it is more natural to think of “witness to Jesus”. It may not be accidental that Strathmann accepted without discussion that “the genitive is a subjective genitive”<sup>20</sup>, and only on this basis went on to explore the meaning of *martyria* in Revelation.

### 5. *The martyria terminology in Revelation*<sup>21</sup>

The context does not always help us to understand the meaning of these terms. In three instances at the end of Revelation (22.16,18,20), *martyria* has the classical meaning “witness”; in all other cases, the meaning of this and related words is ambiguous, and a reference to martyrdom is at least possible. In 1.2, the Greek is awkward. If this verse is translated in isolation, the exclusively evangelistic aspect of the term seems inescapable, and the subjective genitive, “testimony/witness of Jesus” seems preferable. The other cases, however (“Jesus the faithful *martyrs*”, 1.5; “Antipas my faithful *martyrs*”, 2.13; “the amen, the faithful *martyrs*”, 3.14; literally, “the souls of those sealed by means of the word of God and the *martyria* which they had”, 6.9; “when they will complete their *martyria*”, 11.7; “of those who keep the commands of God and have the *martyria* of Jesus”, 12.17; similarly 19.10), all suggest some sort of martyrological background, in the sense that the believer’s witness leads to sacrifice.

The main evidence pointing to this conclusion comes, however, from the three remaining cases. It is quite clear that in 12.11 (“through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their *martyria*”); 17.6 (“from the blood of the saints and from the blood of the *martyrōn Iēsou*); and 20.4 (“I saw . . . the souls of those who had through the *martyria Iēsou*), evangelistic witness is closely connected with martyrdom. There are therefore good reasons to see some martyrological significance in the use of *martyria* terms in Revelation.

Despite Strathmann’s laborious 40-page effort to exclude this possibility, scholars both before and after Strathmann have taken a different view. Earlier, Bauer had taken for granted a martyrological significance even in the New Testament. He therefore gave to *martyrs*, not only in Revelation (1.4; 2.13; 3.14; 17.6) but also in Acts 22.20 (“the blood of Stephen your *martyrs*”) the meaning of “one who witnessed unto death, a martyr”<sup>22</sup>. Later, T. W. Manson, in a lecture in 1956, established beyond any doubt that the change of meaning in the *martyria* word-group not only “took place in the early Church”, but that “the preparation for it had begun much earlier and it can be traced in the Old Testament and in the extra-canonical Jewish writings”<sup>23</sup>. Even Strathmann admitted that in Revelation “the term begins to acquire a martyrological nuance”<sup>24</sup>, being thus “a

<sup>19</sup> Strathmann, *art. cit.* 500.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 500, citing Th. Zahn’s commentary on Rev. 19.10 in n. 13.

<sup>21</sup> K. R. Tossou’s *La Martyria dans l’Apocalypse de S. Jean. Témoinage divin—témoinage humain*, Rome 1982, was not available to me.

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.* 494.

<sup>23</sup> T. W. Manson, “Martyrs and Martyrdom”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 39 (1956-57), 463-484, especially 464f.

<sup>24</sup> Strathmann, *art. cit.* 502.

preliminary step towards the martyrological concept of the witness (*martyr*—martyr) which emerged at once in the early church”<sup>25</sup>. He insisted, however, that in Revelation “the idea of martyrdom does not arise”<sup>26</sup>. Strathmann supported this conclusion by two doubtful arguments. First, he connected the use and meaning of *martyria* in Revelation with the Fourth Gospel—two writings not closely related to one another, either semantically or in terms of language. Second, he tried to eliminate from the Old Testament, especially Isaiah 43-44, all martyr ideas. But K. Holl had earlier pointed out that Deutero-Isaiah emphasized that the prophet ought to die for his witness<sup>27</sup>; this view was shared by others. O. Michel<sup>28</sup> went so far as to claim that Deutero-Isaiah equate prophet and martyr.

We do not wish to press our argument too far. We do not disagree with Strathmann when he states that the *martyria* language of the New Testament is “not yet firmly associated with the concept of the martyr”<sup>29</sup>. What is true, however, is that this association has already started in the New Testament, and especially in Revelation. Even Strathmann admits that “the sphere in which the martyr concept developed was the Church in Asia Minor . . . the area which was the home of Revelation, in which the first clear steps are taken towards such a development.”<sup>30</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

We therefore suggest that the expression *martyria Iēsou* in Revelation, in each of its six occurrences, 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 *martyr*s in the same way as the English “martyr”, as “one who of his own free choice chooses to die for the sake of religion”<sup>31</sup>. Earlier modern Greek translations of the New Testament, such as the so-called Vellas translation of 1967, and the Orthodox paraphrase of Trepmpelas, understood *Iēsou* in these verses as an objective genitive. The new translation keeps some kind of a balance, taking *Iēsou* in 1.2,9 as subjective, and in all other cases as objective. It is my personal conviction that it should have been translated as objective throughout.

If this argument is sound, then what is said in 19.10, *hē gar martyria Iēsou estin to pneuma tēs prophēteias*, which has puzzled almost all exegetes and translators,

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 502; cf. H. Delehaye, *Les origines du culte des martyrs*, Paris, 2nd ed. 1933, 79.

<sup>26</sup> Strathmann, *art. cit.* 501.

<sup>27</sup> K. Holl, “Die Vorstellung vom Märtyre und die Märtyrerakte in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung”, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte* II, Tübingen 1928, 79.

<sup>28</sup> *Prophet und Märtyrer*, Gutersloh 1932; cf. E. Lohmeyer, ‘Die Idee des Martyriums in Judentum und Urchristentum’, *ZST* 5, 1927, 232ff.; G. Fitzer, *Der Begriff des martyrs in Judentum und Urchristentum*, Breslau 1928.

<sup>29</sup> *Art. cit.* 508.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 506. J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Clement of Rome. The Two Epistles to the Corinthians*, London 1869, suggested that “the Neronian persecution had done much to promote this sense” (47).

<sup>31</sup> *Protreptikos* xxi. According to Origen, martyrdom takes place when people “die for religion and prefer to die rather than deny their religion and live” (*ibid.* v).

can be rendered as follows: "What inspires the prophets is that they can witness (even unto death) to Jesus." It is possible that confessional presuppositions may have played a part in the development, in the west, of a purely evangelistic interpretation of *martyria*, whereas in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the idea of martyrdom was from the beginning part of the meaning of the term.

The problem of *martyria* is linked to the Christian understanding of mission and evangelism. As such, it has been thoroughly examined in the last two decades by the World Council of Churches, with great success. It also, however, has some bearing on the practice of Bible translation, and gives additional justification for the UBS preference, wherever possible, for interconfessional translations. I believe that Orthodox participation in this process will increase the chances for better and more objective scientific results in our common task of faithfully translating the written Word of God.

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## FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE PRESENTATION OF NEW MATERIAL

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As one who has grappled with the presentation of new information as a translator and a consultant, I read the article by L. Lode and the response by P. C. Stine in the January issue of **The Bible Translator** with real interest. Discourse analysis is a relative newcomer to the field of linguistics. For years linguistic analysis terminated with the study of the sentence level, but now it is clear that it is necessary to understand the discourse level characteristics of the receptor language in order to produce clear, accurate translations. However, discourse analysis, more than the other fields of linguistics, leads us to drastic modifications of the original structure.

Every serious translator should understand the natural discourse patterns of the receptor language: how participants are introduced, how new information is presented, how a natural discourse is formed, etc. These patterns must be understood and used in the translation as much as possible. The problem is, knowing the natural patterns, how far should we go in reproducing them in the translation of Scripture? Some South American languages use extreme repetition in even the simplest narratives. Should we follow that pattern? In the Chimane language of Bolivia, the action is regularly summarized before it is given in detail. Should we add a verse or a summary in brackets throughout the Scriptures to follow this pattern?

There are two points I would like to bring out. First, as stated by Dr. Stine, it is impossible to communicate, to most of the people for whom we translate, all or even a high percentage of the background information implicit in the gospels. It is suggested in the article that background information regarding Mark 1.40-45 be placed in brackets: [. . . ordinary people did not offer sacrifices to the God of