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Brief Studies

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BRIEF STUDIES

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN THE LANGUAGE OF TODAY. By William F. Beck. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963. xi and 459 pages. Cloth. \$4.75.

The preface to this translation observes that "every word in these (Papyri 66 and 75) and other fine manuscripts was carefully checked to make this an accurate New Testament." What is not stated here is that mere checking does not produce accuracy, and it is not clear whether Beck wishes to accurately reproduce the New Testament as copied in Alexandria or the copy which left the pens of the original writers. But it is not enough to uncover an accurate text (assuming this is even remotely possible); one ought also to render it accurately with adequate appreciation for the type of challenge such high aim entails.

In some cases criticism is rendered difficult because of uncertainty in the reader's mind concerning the textual base used by the translator. Either Beck misunderstood the syntax of 1 Peter 2:11, or he is following a manuscript which reads ὑμῶς. According to the reading of most manuscripts, Peter urges his readers that they should abstain from fleshly lusts, keeping in mind that they are strangers and foreigners (see F. W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter* [Oxford, 1958], p.109). Beck prefers the variant ἀπέχεσθε (which probably arose either as a result of itacism or out of lack of understanding of the syntax of the two accusatives as subjects of the infinitive ἀπέχεσθαι), perhaps out of a misplaced confidence in Papyrus 72. Nestle's 25th edition does not cite any variant for τούτοις in Jude 7, but Beck (who claims to rely on the best manuscripts) either utilizes in this case late minuscules and versional evidence without noting the dominant textual tradition or he has simply obscured the

point of the verse, that the citizens of the cities of the plain committed a sin akin to that of the wicked angels. On the other hand, the omission of the reference to the stirring of the water (John 5:3b,4) is adequately explained. Of John 7:53—8:11, Beck says frankly in a note, "It is most likely a true story in the life of Jesus, but not a part of the Gospel that John wrote." Yet, despite their omission by Beck's "best manuscripts," he prints these verses in the body of the text (per contra Beck's note on Acts 8:37). In his rendering of Mark 9:45-47, Beck omits two entire verses (44 and 46) because Vaticanus and Sinaiticus do not include them. He says substantially the same thing about Mark 16:9-20, but retains the verses without explanation.

There are a goodly number of felicitous and accurate renderings of the original (note especially Matt. 2:16, 21:38; Mark 1:36, 9:38; Luke 1:69 [but not Col. 2:1], Luke 22:31,32; John 1:51 [but not 4:48]; Acts 12:15; 1 Cor. 9:24 ["Like them, run to win!"—NEB]; James 2:4, 22) but in not a few instances Beck has misunderstood the writer's meaning. A particularly glaring example is the rendering of Heb. 2:5-9. Beck's use of capital letters in pronominal reference to Jesus obscures the designed ambiguity of the quotation from Ps. 8:5-7 (LXX). The author raises the question: To whom does Ps. 8:5-7 apply? It speaks of man and of everything subject to man. Therefore the psalmist cannot be referring to man in general. But there is a man who was made a little lower than the angels—namely, Jesus. We see that man crowned with glory and honor. In other words, says the author, the psalmist makes sense only if we understand him as talking about *the* man, Jesus. In 1 Peter 1:11 προμαρτυρέω is rendered "exactly predict."

The context, however, does not suggest a qualitative element. The word *κατατομή* in Phil. 3:2 does not mean "circumcise" but refers to a horrible mutilation. The optative *πάσχοιτε* in 1 Peter 3:14 is important for an understanding of the social situation of the recipients. In John 7:8 Beck completely misses the writer's accent on *this* feast, and he reads a dubious οὐκ. Paul's emphasis on the Israelites' initiative in getting themselves baptized (1 Cor. 10:2, *ἐβαπτίσαντο*, middle!) is ignored. The ingressive force of *ἔζησαν* is missed in Rev. 20:4. Luke 1:3 does not say that Luke decided to check everything carefully and then write, but that he felt he was in as good a position as anyone else to write since he *had* a close acquaintance with the matters under discussion. The wordplay in Matthew's *κύριε* and *κυρίων* (15:27) is inexplicably ignored through Beck's "Lord" and "Masters."

In 1 Tim. 6:10 *ῥίζα* γὰρ πάντων τῶν κακῶν is rendered "a root of all evils," but *ἡμέρα* κυρίου in 1 Thess. 5:2, unless Beck is following A and the Byzantine tradition, is translated "*the* (italics added) Lord's day." A parallel thought and construction is found in Athenaeus (xii. 67): *ἀρχὴ καὶ ῥίζα* παντὸς ἀγαθοῦ ἢ τῆς γαστροῦς ἡδονῆς. The syntax in Plut. *Consol. ad Apol.* 17 is similar: *μέτρον* γὰρ τοῦ βίου τὸ καλὸν, οὐ τὸ τοῦ χρόνου μῆκος, and philologically justifies the rendering in AV, RSV, NEB, to mention only a few. It is sheer pedantry to insist that the love of money is not the only root of evil. The thought is a literary convention with the Roman moralists. (Cf. Horace, *Odes* III, 16)

The word *δούλος* is the standard Greek expression for slave, a perfectly understandable English word. In the epistles especially it is necessary to render as slave if one is to appreciate the New Testament doctrines of sin and grace. There is no less "slave" in Phil. 1:1 (where *δούλοι* is rendered "servants," as Beck does in most cases) than in Gal. 6:17.

The description of Mary as a "humble servant" (Luke 1:48) contributes an ambiguity to a passage which is quite clear in the original, for *ταπεινώσις* means "low position," not an attitude of mind. Since "love" best renders *ἀγάπη*, some precision is lost if the word is used to render *χάρις*, as Beck does throughout Galatians. In Luke 1:30 the verbal cognate is rendered "God is good to you" (cf. Luke 2:40). Mary's "I'm not living with a husband" reminds one of RSV's inadequate "since I have no husband." Better, "I know no man intimately."

Luke does not say that the Bereans "were very eager to get the Word" (Acts 17:11). The word *προθυμία* here means "goodwill," "lack of prejudice." They were willing to give the apostles a hearing. They were more fair-minded and generous than those of Thessalonica and were willing to investigate.

In some cases no translation is given. Since the term "Christ" is now in popular expression a proper name rather than descriptive of His Messianic role, the word *Χριστός* in Matt. 27:17 should have been rendered "Messiah." The New English Bible does it neatly: "or Jesus called Messiah?" Similarly in John 1:41 no attempt is even made to translate what the author himself translates. Beck renders: "(The Greek word for Him is Christ)." But the word *Χριστός* here is John's Greek translation of the Hebrew word transliterated by him as *Μεσσίας*, meaning "anointed." Beck owes his readers a translation of John's translation. In verse 38 Beck *does* translate a precise parallel, rendering the translation of *ῥαββί* "(which means Teacher)."

In a translation designed for a "coffee and doughnuts" (the delightful anachronism is Beck's, p. viii) public the word *βλασφημέω* ought to be translated and not merely transmitted through the conventional loan route. The *Basic English* approximates the idea in Luke 5:21: "no respect for God." Since Beck's translation aims to speak in everyday language, it is incomprehensible to this re-

viewer why a word like "blessed" is used in Luke 1:45 for the word μακάριος. "Happy" would convey much more meaning. And certainly "righteous" and "righteousness" are hardly "coffee and doughnuts" words. In modern parlance we say "Barnabas and I," not "I and Barnabas" (1 Cor. 9:6). "The Father and I" would be more appropriate than "I and the Father" (John 10:30). The returning wastrel wears "shoes" (Luke 15:22), but Peter must do with sandals (Acts 12:8) while the Roman soldier is equipped like a GI (Eph. 6:15); ὑπόδημα and σανδάλιον are, in fact, synonymous.

Notes are occasionally used to clarify the translation, but unless one happens to have read the interpretation of "denarii" on p. 36, he will have to go to the money changers when he reads p. 128 (see Luke 10:35: "he took out two denarii"). Dollars are used for the reader's convenience in Matt. 25:14-30, but he has difficulty making change with talents (18:24), not to speak of shekels (26:16)! The note to 1 John 4:10 is less than fortunate, for it contradicts the author's own assertion that God's love was in motion *before* Jesus actually made His sacrifice (see also John 3:16). Besides, the verse is clear and requires no note.

Other marginal notations, especially those which present the translator's historical conclusions, are less than felicitous. His courage in dating the events and conversations recorded in the Gospels deserves unstinted admiration, but the attempt is not without peril, as the contradiction in the dating of Matt. 23:37-39 and Luke 13:34,35 shows. The Lukan passage is dated in Perea, January, A. D. 30, whereas the Matthean parallel is placed on April 4 of the same year. Luke 12:58,59 is placed in Judea, November to December, A. D. 29; the parallel in Matt. 5:25,26 is placed near Capernaum, early summer 28. The dates and places attached

to the epistles are in some cases expressed with caution (2 Peter, "perhaps Rome, A. D. 62"; James, "Jerusalem, perhaps A. D. 61"; Hebrews, "perhaps Greece or Asia Minor, before A. D. 70"). But if Beck holds that Jude is dependent on 2 Peter, his unqualified statement concerning Jude ("Before A. D. 70, Syria") would appear most improbable, especially since his rendering of Jude 4 ("predicted long ago" — more correctly "previously described in writing") would demand a longer time interval than eight years between 2 Peter and Jude. The captivity letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) are unqualifiedly allotted to Ephesus, early A. D. 55. But such an early dating for Colossians is difficult and would seem to necessitate acceptance by Beck of P. N. Harrison's view ("Onesimus and Philemon," *ATR*, XXXII [October 1950], 272) that the author of the Letter to the Ephesians made additions to the original Colossian letter. The traditional view is that these letters are written from Rome.

The use of italics in the AV to indicate additions demanded by English idiom has long proved an annoyance, and a bane to intelligent reading of that version on the part of those who considered the italicized words the important part of the text. Beck's desire to accent through italics the Old Testament sources used in the New Testament is not subject to criticism, but some criteria for the identification especially of allusions should be discernible. Beck does not hesitate to put even single words in italics (cf. Rev. 3:20, "*open*," with a reference to Song of Songs 5:2), yet no cognizance is taken of the clear reference to Ex. 24:3-8 in 1 Peter 1:2 (the word "sprinkled" is not italicized). Mark 1:2,3 uses language from Ex. 23:20, but there is no hint to this effect in Beck's table of passages. There is also no reference

to Ex. 4:19 in connection with Matt. 2:20, although 1 Kings 17:23 is referred to at Luke 7:15 (see also Matt. 2:6). The reference to Zech. 3:2 at Jude 9 is misleading. Beck's practice is to cite noncanonical authors in a special note (see on Acts 17:28). Zechariah says nothing about an angel disputing over the body of Moses. According to Clement of Alexandria (*Adumb. in Ep. Judae*, Migne PG IX, col. 733), Didymus (*Ep. Judae enarratio*, PG, XXXIX, 1814 and 1815), and Origen (*De princ.* 3, 2, 1, PG XI, col. 303) Jude gives information derived from an apocryphal writing, *Assumption of Moses*. Similarly a reference should have been made to the *Book of Enoch* in connection with vv. 14 and 15.

To sum up, no consistent critical patterns are discernible. Some inkling of what the reader might expect is given in Beck's prefatory assertion that not only Matthew, John, and Paul, but also "the others" who wrote the New Testament, used "the everyday Greek of the people of Jesus' day" (p. viii). The fact is that no one except a rhetorician in the classroom ever spoke in the involved style of 2 Peter. Hebrews is no first-year high school essay. And Luke's account of the shipwreck (Acts 28) is as fine a piece of literary prose as one can hope to find in Hellenistic Greek literature.

Here lies the major defect in this translation. Beck thinks that contractions will carry the burden of an up-to-date communication. Even the staid and polished writer to the Hebrews expresses himself in banal English colloquialisms. But "I'll" and "it's" and sundry other uses of the apostrophe cannot conceal the fact that Beck has not learned to write simple prose with artless ease.

A better command of the English language and sharper critical discernment are necessary for strengthening this translation.

FREDERICK W. DANKER

"DIE SAMMLUNG" DISSOLVES

The final number (Michaelmas, 1963) of *Evangelisch/Katholisch*, the organ of *Die Sammlung*, a group of German Lutheran theologians organized in 1954 with a view to achieving a better mutual understanding between their church and the Roman Catholic Church, reports the decision of the group to disband. In a letter of Provost Hans Asmussen to the Bishop of Bavaria, Dr. Herman Dietzfelbinger, the delegated representative for interconfessional matters of the Lutheran Bishops' Conference, the former lists as some of the reasons for this decision the following: "One of the goals which *Die Sammlung* set for itself has been achieved. The churches are acting corporately in their approaches to one another. A relationship has been structured which commands our cordial affirmation. The next steps that need to be taken require a broader basis. If other goals for which we have been striving have not been achieved, we are persuaded that we must try to attain them in some other way. [Nevertheless,] the dissolution of *Die Sammlung* does not imply that we are in agreement with the manner in which our church is carrying on its conversation with Rome."

Three articles amplify Asmussen's letter, one by Asmussen himself, a second by Ernst Fincke, another leader of the group, and the third by the organization's secretary and editor of its organ, Wolfgang Lehmann. This was the same group which, together with Max Lackmann (who later withdrew to found his own *Bund für evangelisch-katholische Wiedervereinigung*) and Richard Baumann (author of *Evangelische Romfahrt*, issued in English as *To See Peter* [New York: David McKay Co., c. 1953]), published the first annual of the organization, *Katholische Reformation* (2d ed., 1958), a commentary on the "Twelve Theses" of *Die Sammlung*. The group published three further annuals: *Die Erbsünde*, by Ernst Kinder; a jointly written work by the Lutheran theologian

Peter Meinhold and the Roman Catholic theologian Erwin Iserloh, *Abendmahl und Opfer*; and *Die Kirche—Volk Gottes*, by four Lutheran authors (Asmussen, Fincke, and Lehmann plus Helmut Echternach) and three Roman Catholics.

In his supplementary article Asmussen rejects the idea that *Die Sammlung* ended in a fiasco. The organization, he says, had always contended that it was not enough for private groups to work toward an altered relationship between the denominations. Today the Roman Catholic Church has its Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity and has been represented officially in an increasing degree at non-Roman Catholic assemblies. Similarly the Evangelical churches have sent official delegated observers to the Second Vatican Council.

Die Sammlung has never conceived of union with the Roman Catholic Church as a "return," he continues. *Both Rome and non-Roman Catholic Christendom* must change to an extent that we cannot conceive even though we may try to imagine some of the alterations that may be called for.

Asmussen deplors the fact that Evangelical Christians too frequently do not take seriously enough what he calls "the question of truth." He charges that the Roman Catholic position on mixed marriages and the repression of non-Roman Catholics in Spain are often presented in non-Roman Catholic circles in such a way that the real achievements of Vatican II are occluded. He sees the reason for this kind of attitude in the embarrassment of non-Roman Catholics which results from their doctrinal chaos. Even Lutherans are not agreed on the interpretation of the Lutheran Symbols, he points out. Our association with the other non-Roman Catholic bodies in the World Council of Churches is not, he insists, based on the *consensus de doctrina evangelii* that our

Symbols demand. We German Lutherans, he declares, not only tolerate the Kantian criticism of the tenets of the Christian faith, but we let it play a decisive role in the education of the next generation of theologians; this makes us poor partners in the interconfessional dialog, so poor that many Roman Catholic theologians have justly declared that they do not know how to address non-Roman Catholics.

Asmussen regrets that the delegated observers of the Evangelical Church in Germany, who have so great an opportunity to exert a profound influence on the course of events at the Council, all represent a single orientation, although he concedes that Edmund Schlink is "a man who, in spite of the uncertainties involved in the route by which he came to his present position, is strongly bound by the Lutheran tradition." On the other hand, groups like the Confraternity of St. Michael, which has had years of experience in dealing with Roman Catholic matters, were not levied upon. This contradicts the essence of Evangelical Christianity. The differences between Rome and Evangelical Christendom are not things that can be resolved either by ecclesiastical cabinet ministers or by theological experts. (He urges that we might even learn from the Roman Catholic Church, which admits its theological experts to the Council merely as consultants.) In addition, he complains, the information that finally trickles down to the pastors and parishes does not enable them to arrive at valid conclusions.

Asmussen concludes by calling upon the bishops to take seriously the teaching office that Article XXVIII of the Augsburg Confession imposes upon them; if they will do so, he asserts, it will be possible for Evangelical Christendom to enter into a really responsible dialog with the Roman Catholic Church. ARTHUR CARL PIEPKORN