

THE NEW LATIN TRANSLATION OF THE PSALTER

(By the MOST REV. MGR. PROF. P. P. SAYDON
B.LITT., B.L.CAN., D.D., S.S.L.)

ST. ROBERT BELLARMINE in a prefatory letter to H.H. Pope Paul V prefixed to his Commentary on the Psalms deplored the fact that, though the daily recitation of the Psalms was an ecclesiastical obligation, very few understood what they read; "..... liber Psalmorum, quem ecclesiastici omnes quotidie legunt, et pauci admodum intellegunt". Unfortunately these words are as true to-day as they were in the 16th century, and many ecclesiastics still complain that, despite their attentive recitation of the Breviary, they are desperately unable to make any sense out of many verses of the Psalter. And, one may add, what they understand is very often the opposite of, or at least very different from, the sense intended by the sacred writer. Therefore it is not at all surprising that many a learned ecclesiastic have in recent times expressed the wish that a more readable and a more intelligible translation should replace the Vulgate Psalter.

The unintelligibility of our Latin Psalter is due not so much to a defective theological knowledge as to intrinsic defects of the version itself. As is well known, the Psalms which we read in the Breviary are a Latin version from a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. Every translation has its own merits and faults depending on the literary skill of the translator, on the principles and methods of his work, on the quality of the text which he is translating as well as on the degree of textual deterioration which inevitably takes place in the course of its manuscript transmission. Therefore many and diverse are the causes that are responsible for the present state of unintelligibility of the Latin Psalter.

The Psalms were first translated from Hebrew into Greek about the middle of the 2nd century B.C. as a part of a complete version of the O.T. known as the Septuagint. Up to that time the Hebrew Psalms, the majority of which go back to the 11th or 10th century B.C., had already been copied and revised many times and all these processes were sources of textual alterations and corruptions. Compare, for example, Ps. 17 *Diligam te Domine* with 2Kgs 22 where it recurs with textual variations.

So also Ps. 13 and Ps. 52, both beginning with the words *Dixit insipiens in corde suo*, are really two slightly different forms of the same Psalm. Ps. 9 *Confitebor tibi Domine in toto corde meo: narrabo omnia mirabilia tua* and its sequel *Ut quid Domine*, which in the Hebrew text are reckoned as two separate Psalms, formed originally one Psalm, as is evinced by the alphabetical arrangement of the strophes and by the fact that both in the LXX and in St. Jerome's version from the Hebrew they read as one Psalm. But though the general alphabetical structure is manifest, some strophes have disappeared entirely and some are disguised by the alteration or by the corruption of the first word of the strophe. Therefore it may be confidently assumed that at the time of the Septuagint version the Hebrew text of the Psalms was already some distance from its original form. These textual corruptions originating with the Jewish copyists were the first source of obscure and unintelligible renderings which ultimately passed into our Latin Psalter.

Another cause which has largely contributed to the unintelligibility of our Latin Psalter is the defective literary skill of the Greek translators. H. B. Swete, one of the best authorities on Septuagint studies, says that the Greek version of the Psalms shows obvious signs of incompetence (1). The Hebrew text is translated literally and slavishly. No attempt is made to give a Greek turn to Hebrew idiomatic constructions or to round off an expression that sounds harsh to a Greek ear. Not infrequently the translators, who, let it be remarked, had no grammar and no dictionary but derived all their knowledge of Hebrew from oral tradition, missed the real value of the Hebrew tenses and failed to hit upon the true meaning of difficult words and expressions.

This Greek version, with all its merits and faults, became the official text of the Psalms to the Hellenistic Jews who could not read their liturgical songs in the original tongue. The New Testament writers used it freely in their preaching and writings. With the rise of Christianity it passed into the hands of the Church and soon spread all over the Greek-speaking world, giving rise, on account of textual alterations, to different forms or recensions.

(1) *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, Cambridge, 1914, pp. 315f.

A Latin translation of the Psalms first appears in the writings of St. Cyprian in North Africa where Latin was the language of everyday life. The translation was probably made in the 2nd century A.D. When Latin superseded the Greek language in the Church of Rome, the Greek Bible was again translated into Latin, and we meet the first traces of this translation in the writings of Novatian, a Roman writer of the 3rd century A.D.

These were popular translations made by unknown and illiterate translators who reproduced almost mechanically the Greek text in that peculiar form of Latin that was used by the masses. St. Augustine says of these early translators: "In those early times anyone who possessed a Greek Bible and had some knowledge of Greek and Latin would take upon himself the task of a translator" (2). In this manner all the Hebraisms and all the obscure and wrong renderings of the Septuagint found an easy way into the Latin versions. I submit here a few examples illustrating the defective methods of both the Greek and Latin translators.

a) Wrong translations: In Ps. 67, 16 the meaningless *montes coagulati* should be *montes clivosi*, the Hebrew adjective being wrongly referred to a root which means also 'curd, cheese'. In Ps. 72, 4 *non est respectus morti eorum* neither the Latin *respectus* nor its Greek equivalent correspond to Hebrew which means 'pains', hence the sense is: *Non sunt mala eis*, 'they are not in pain'. Sometimes proper names are translated as common nouns, and common nouns as proper names, thus Ps. 41, 7 *a monte modico* is *a monte Misar*; Ps. 59, 8 *convallem tabernaculorum* is *convallem Succoth*; Ps. 67, 16 *mons pinguis* is *mons Basan*.

b) Confused translations. Hebrew words having more than one meaning are very often translated by the same word even when the sense requires a different meaning; thus the verb *shaphat*, which generally means 'iudicare', means also *ius alicuius tueri*; hence Ps. 42, 1 *Iudica me Deus* should read *Ius meum tuere, Deus*; the *iudex viduarum* in Ps. 67, 6 is a *defensor viduarum*, and in many cases *iudicium* stands for *ius*. Another word susceptible of various meanings is *nephesh*, which is invariably translated *psyche, anima*, even when the context requires a different meaning. Thus Ps. 26, 12 *Ne tradideris me in animas tribulan-*

(2) *De doctr. Christ.* II, 16; PL 34, 430.

tium me should read *Ne tradideris me desiderio tribulantium me*. Cp. the parallel verse in Ps. 40, 3 *et non tradat eum in animum inimicorum eius*.

c) Idiomatic expressions literally translated. Exx. *ponere aliquem dorsum* for *aliquem ventere in fugam*, Ps. 17, 41; 20, 13; *in corde et corde* for *corde duplici*, Ps. 11, 3; *benedicere* used with the antithetical meaning 'to curse', as in Ps. 10, 3 *et iniquus benedicitur* for *et iniquus blasphematur*; *ponere cor* for *considerare*, Ps. 47, 17 *ponite corda vestra in virtute sua* instead of *considerate virtutem suam*.

d) Servile renderings. The Greek translators have in numerous cases missed the real meaning of particles. Thus the preposition 'al', which generally means 'upon', has also a comparative sense which is not expressed neither by the LXX nor by the Vulgate; exx: Ps. 17, 18 *confortati sunt super me* for *fortiores sunt me*; cp. Ps. 18, 11; 83, 11; 118, 72. The preposition 'a' and the expression *mippene* 'a facie' have sometimes a causal meaning 'propter' which is not rendered by the LXX; exx: Ps. 37, 4 *non est pax ossibus meis a facie peccatorum meorum* i.e. *propter peccata mea*; Ps. 6, 8 *Turbatus est a furore oculus meus* instead of *propter furem*.

e) Wrong rendering of tenses. Ps. 42, 3 *ipsa me deduxerunt et adduxerunt*, after the petition for God's assistance *Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam* the past tense is obviously contrary to the sense. We must read according to Hebrew *ipsa me deducant et adducant*.

f) Misreading of words. The Greek translators have occasionally read the unpointed Hebrew text with different vowels. Thus in Ps. 90, 3 the triconsonantal word *d-b-r*, was read *dabar* by the Septuagint translators and consequently rendered by *verbum*, while the Massoretes read it *deber* which means *pestis*. The Massoretic reading suits the context better, and therefore the rendering *a peste maligna* is preferable to *a verbo mendacii*. In Ps. 87, 11 *Numquid... medici suscitabunt* physicians are here intruders dragged in by the Septuagint translators who read *rophe'im* instead of *repha'im* 'defuncti'.

To these wrong renderings one must add the Latin translators' share of mistranslations and a linguistic usage with which the modern reader is not familiar. In course of time copies of the Latin Psalms were multiplied, new translations and revisions

were made and the variations in the several manuscripts became so numerous that St. Jerome, in a letter to Pope Damasus in 383, complained that there were as many varieties of texts as there were manuscripts (3). After having revised the Latin Gospels, and very probably the rest of the New Testament, St. Jerome, probably at the request of Pope Damasus, revised also the Latin text of the Psalms (4). St. Jerome does not appear to have been satisfied with this revision which, as he informs us, was carried out hastily, and, as errors cropped up again, he undertook another revision of the Latin Psalms from the LXX (5), a revision which, on account of its being first adopted by the Church of Gaul, came to be known as the "Psalterium Gallicanum" and in course of time was incorporated into the Breviary. Later on St. Jerome translated also the Psalms from Hebrew into Latin, but this translation, though far superior to his previous revisions, never succeeded in superseding the Gallican Psalter. The history of the Latin Psalter does not end with Jerome. For a long time both Jerome's revised text and the so-called Old Latin continued to be transcribed and read in Church and at home. Copyists often mixed up readings of the two forms of text, besides adding errors of their own (6). The text was definitely fixed by the Roman Commissions appointed between 1561 and 1592 and published in the Sixto-Clementine edition of the Vulgate.

This brief survey of the history of the origin of the Latin liturgical Psalter is intended to justify the complaints of those who recite the Breviary and the impellent need of a more readable translation. A preliminary point, however, had to be settled. Was a new translation necessary? was not a revision enough to meet the requirements of the average priest? A revision similar, more or less, to that carried out by St. Jerome was obviously the easier course and there were some who stood for it. But, the literary problems of the Psalter are so varied and complex and the linguistic and exegetic study of the Psalms has advanced so far that

(3) PL 29, 526. Though St. Jerome's words 'tot enim sunt exemplaria pene quot codices' refer directly to the Gospel-manuscripts, there is no reason why they should not be extended to other manuscripts, especially to the manuscripts of those books that were more frequently copied.

(4) *Praef. in libr. Psalmorum*, PL 29, 117.

(5) L. cit.

(6) A. Rahlfs, *Septuaginta-Studien*, 2, pp. 61-70. See also A. Allgeier, *Die altlateinischen Psalterien*, Freiburg i, B., 1928.

a revision would have resulted in a sort of patchwork which would have been neither the Vulgate text nor a new translation. Fortunately the former opinion prevailed and by order of H.H. Pope Pius XII a fresh translation of the Psalms and the Canticles of the Breviary has now been made and published by the Professors of the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome under the title "*Liber Psalmorum cum Canticis Breviarii Romani, nova e textibus primigeniis interpretatio Latina cum notis criticis et exegeticis cura Professorum Pontificii Instituti Biblici edita*"; Romae, 1945. By the *Motu proprio* 'In cotidianis precibus' given on the 24th March 1945 and prefixed to this edition H.H. Pope Pius XII places this new translation in the hands of all those who are under the obligation of reciting the office permitting them at the same time to make use of it in their private and public recitation of the office after the publication of the liturgical edition of the Psalter.

The first and most important task confronting the translator of an ancient text that has been handed down in a number of different forms and versions is the critical reconstruction of the text itself, that is, the determination of its original form or, at least, of that form that is nearest to the original. Our Hebrew text of the Psalms, even in its best and latest critical edition (7), represents that form which had been definitely fixed by the Masoretes before the 10th century A.D. and which had been rendered uniform in the preceding centuries, by the elimination of all variant readings. But the version carry us much further back. The LXX version was made in the 3rd or 2nd century B.C.; the Old Latin versions appeared in the 2nd and 3rd century A.D.; Jerome's translation was made in the closing years of the 4th century A.D. To these we must add three other Greek versions made in the 2nd century A.D. by Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus respectively; the Syriac version called the Peshitta made probably in the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. and the Aramaic Targum of the Psalms which represents a traditional oral translation from Hebrew dating from the 9th century A.D. but which in its oral form goes back to the 1st century A.D. All these text-witnesses must be called upon to bear evidence of the state of the Hebrew

(7) By F. Buhl in R. Kittel's 3rd edit. of *Biblia Hebraica*, Stuttgart, first separately in 1930 and then in 1937 in the complete edition of the O.T.

text in its pre-Massoretic stages and, when their evidence is carefully sifted, to serve as a means for its emendation.

I do not wish to imply that the versions have invariably preserved a better form of text. They all have their own deviations arising either from a misunderstanding of the original text or from later scribal corruptions. But in certain cases they have unquestionable claims to originality. In all cases the determination of the correct reading, which is the indispensable basis of a good translation, requires a keen sense of discernment and must absolutely be made on the ground of established principles of textual criticism independently of subjective considerations which many a time have led critics astray in their search after the original form of the Hebrew text.

Applying the principles of textual criticism objectively and intelligently the translators of the Biblical Institute have produced a text which is much nearer the original than either the Massoretic text or any of the ancient versions. It is not possible to enumerate here all the emendations made by the help of the versions, but I wish to mention just a few :

Ps. 21, 17 '*foderunt manus meas et pedes meos*'; this reading, which is also that of the LXX and, with slight differences, that of the ancient versions has been preferred to the Hebrew: *sicut leo manus meas et pedes meos* which is meaningless.

Ps. 68, 11 '*et operui in ieiunio animam meam*'; 'I covered my soul in fasting'. I wonder what meaning the average priest can make out of these words. MT has 'I wept' for 'I covered', and the sense is: I wept myself out in fasting. The difficulty against this translation is that the verb *baka* 'to weep' is never used with a reflexive meaning as in English 'to weep oneself out'. St. Jerome translates *et fleui* thus supporting the MT. But the LXX and the Syriac version read: 'and I humbled myself with fasting', a reading which is preferred by the translators and is very probably original. cp. Ps. 34, 13 *Humibiliam in ieiunio animam meam*. The Vulg. reading can be easily traced back to a Greek origin as an obvious confusion of *synekamposa* 'I humbled' read as *synekalypsa* 'I covered'.

Ps. 70, 6 '*in te cantatio mea semper*'; 'of thee shall I continually sing'. All versions give the same sense. But the construction is awkward. One would rather expect *tehillati atta* 'laus mea tu es' as in Jer. 17, 14. Symmachus, however, seems to have read

tohalti 'speravi' and this reading has been adopted in the translation as more consistent with the context. Hence we read : *in te speravi semper*.

Ps. 76, 11 '*Et dixi : Nunc coepi, haec mutatio dexteræ Excelsi*'. This rendering is supported by the LXX and the Syriac version. But St. Jerome has read the text differently and translated : '*Et dixi : Inbecillitas mea est haec; commutatio dexteræ Excelsi*'. The same reading is given by the Jewish translator Aquila, and is certainly preferable. Hence in the new translation we read : '*Et dico : Hic est dolor meus, quod mutata est dextera Altissimi*'.

But sometimes the corruption goes further back than all our versions. In this case the evidence of versions is of no value as they all derive from a corrupt original. The critic will have to fall to conjectures which may attain a high degree of probability when they are founded on the rules of paleography, on the knowledge of the causes of errors and on the requirements of grammar, style and context. The Professors of the Biblical Institute have, very judiciously and sparingly, made use of conjectural corrections consisting mostly in the transposition of a word, in a different vocalization of the same consonants or in the change of similar consonants. The following are a few instances :

Ps. 2, 11b. 12a the words '*apprehendite disciplinam*' are a well-known textual puzzle. The Latin is the exact rendering of the Greek *dracasthe*, 'receive instruction' which does not correspond to Hebrew. St. Jerome following Symmachus translates *adorate pure*, though in his *Commentarioli* he refers another translation *adorate filium* (PI. 23, 413; 26, 827). The Hebrew can only mean : *osculamini purum*, or *osculamini pure*, or *osculamini filium*, i.e. 'pay homage to the elected one', or 'pay homage sincerely'. All these translations are either impossible or improbable. Interpreters have tried all ways to make the text yield a reasonable sense. The simplest correction consists in transposing the words corresponding to '*apprehendite disciplinam*'. The sense of vv. 11, 12 then would be : *Servite Domino in timore et exultate ei; cum tremore praestate obsequium illi*. This correction proposed about 40 years ago by Sievers and Bertholet is now generally accepted and has been adopted in this translation (8).

(8) G. E. Closen, *Gedanken zur Textkritik von Ps. 2, 11b, 12a*; Bibl. 21 (1940) 288-309.

Ps. 72, 4 *Quoniam non est respectus morti eorum : et firmamentum in plaga eorum.* This translation yields no sense. Apart from three mistranslations *respectus*, *firmamentum* and *plaga*, the mention of death is utterly inconsistent with the context which is describing the earthly felicity of the wicked. Modern interpreters generally split up the word *lemotam* 'morte eorum' into two words *lemo* 'iis' and *tam* 'integrum, sanum'. Hence the whole verse in the new translation reads thus : *Nulla enim sunt iis tormenta, sanum et pingue est corpus eorum.*

Ps. 110, 3 reads thus : *Tecum principium in die virtutis tuae in splendoribus sanctorum, ex utero ante luciferum genui te.* But Hebrew gives an entirely different sense : 'Populus tuus sponte se offert in die fortitudinis tuae in splendore sanctitatis : ex utero aurorae tibi ros adolescentiae tuae'. LXX-Vulg. represent Christ, to whom the Psalm refers (Mt. 22, 42-46) as holding the supreme command of an army marching out for the spiritual conquest of the world and they both entrust him with this leadership on account of his eternal generation from his Father. But according to Hebrew Christ is simply marching forth to subdue his enemies while youthful warriors, innumerable as the drops of the morning dew, flock to his standard.

The whole verse critically emended is translated thus : *Tecum principatus die ortus tui in splendore sanctitatis : ante luciferum, sicut rorem, genui te.*

The translation of this verse does not claim more than a fair degree of probability, but, though some of the proposed emendations are questionable, the translation is far clearer than the Vulgate and is in perfect conformity with Ps. 2 and with patristic tradition.

It is upon such a critical reconstruction of the Hebrew text that the new translation of the Psalter is based. As the object of textual criticism is to recover so far as possible the actual words written by the sacred writers and, by this means, to determine their thoughts with the utmost possible accuracy, it follows quite logically that a translation must aim at reproducing the original writer's ideas as faithfully and as clearly as possible. Literalness and perspicuity are therefore the two chief qualities of a good translation. The ancient Greek and Latin translators of the Psalms held different views especially as re-

gards the fidelity of a translation. They endeavoured to render the original word for word, almost mechanically, thus missing the real force of certain idiomatic expressions, the syntactical value of particles and sometimes the true meaning of words and phrases. On the contrary, some modern translators run to the opposite extreme, reproducing the sense without caring much for details of words and expressions of the original. The translators of the Psalter have avoided both extremes; the translation is literal but not servile, and clear without being paraphrastic. The following verses of Ps. 67 *Exurgat Deus* from the old and the new translation will make clear the difference between the two ways of translating.

Rex virtutum dilecti dilecti :	Reges exercituum fugiunt fugiunt;
et speciei domus dividere spolia.	et incolae domus dividunt praedam.
Si dormiatis inter medios cleros,	Dum quiescebatis inter caulas gregum,
pennae columbae deargentatae,	alae columbae nitebant argento
et posteriora dorsi eius in pallore auri.	et pennae eius flavore auri
Dum discernit caelestis reges super eam,	Dum omnipotens illic disper- gebat reges,
nive dealbabuntur in Selmon; mons Dei, mons pinguis.	nives ceciderunt in Salmon. Montes excelsi sunt montes Basan :
Mons coagulatus, mons pin- guis;	clivosi montes sunt montes Basan :
ut quid suspicamini montes coagulatos?	Cur invidiosi aspicitis, montes clivosi,
Mons, in quo beneplacitum est Deo habitare in eo;	montem in quo habitare pla- cuit Deo,
etenim Dominus habitabit in finem.	immo in quo habitabit Domi- nus semper?

This is a plain translation of the Massoretic text without any textual corrections and without any paraphrastic renderings. For such a translation a thorough and accurate knowledge of Hebrew is essential. It has already been remarked that the ancient translators derived all their knowledge of Hebrew from

oral tradition and we all know that oral tradition is not always a reliable source of information. While the Greek translators have certainly preserved some very rare meanings of Hebrew words which were never recorded by later lexicographers, it must be admitted that not infrequently they simply picked out the wrong meaning; in some cases a single Hebrew word stands for two originally different though like-sounding words with different meanings one of which became absorbed by the other and so disappeared entirely; sometimes, it may be supposed, tradition failed completely to supply any meaning.

In recent years Semitic linguistic research has advanced so much that the need for a revision of the Hebrew vocabulary has long been felt. The comparative study of Hebrew and the cognate Semitic languages, especially the Accadian language, which was unknown to the older lexicographers, as well as a deeper investigation into the lexical element of the LXX have in recent years brought out new Hebrew roots and new meanings of existing roots which have not only modified the traditional translation of many biblical passages but have also helped to smooth away the difficulties of obscure and unintelligible verses of the Psalms (9). Not less important for a better understanding of the Bible is the investigation into the grammatical structure of Hebrew, especially the complicated problem of the use of tenses (10). Although some of the results of this linguistic research are still open to controversy, others may be considered as well established and have been accepted in the new translation of the Psalter. I give here a few examples:

The Hebrew word *nephesh* generally means 'soul' and is usually translated by *psyche* 'anima' in the Psalms and in the other books of the O.T. Now in some cases this translation does not suit the context, thus in Ps. 68, 2 the words *intraverunt aquae usque ad animam meam* hardly make any sense though the word *aquae* is sometimes used metaphorically in the sense of 'suffering, persecution, oppression'. Still more incomprehensible is Is. 5, 14 *dilatavit infernus animam suam*. As the same word occurs in Ac-

(9) See the numerous contributions by G. R. Driver to *The Journal of Theological Studies*, *the Journal of Biblical Literature*, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*.

(10) G. R. Driver, *Problems of the Hebrew verbal system*, Edinburgh, 1936.

cadian with the primary meaning of 'breath, soul, life' and a second meaning 'throat', and as this meaning is absolutely required in Is. 5, 14 by the context and by the law of parallelism, there is every reason to suppose that this secondary meaning of the word *nephesh* was not unknown to the Hebrew writers (11). Let us now apply this meaning to those passages where *anima* is inappropriate: Ps. 68, 2 *venerunt aquae usque ad collum meum*, the image being that of a drowning man who is in peril of being swept away by the current. Ps. 77, 17 *petentes cibum secundum cupiditatem suam* instead of *ut peterent escas animabus suis*. A more forceful and more literal translation would have been *petentes cibum faucibus suis*. Ps. 104, 18 *ferro ligatum erat collum eius*, instead of *ferrum pertransiit animam eius*, the reference being to Joseph's slavery in Egypt.

Ps. 16, 4 *ego custodivi vias duras*; Hebrew has a genitive instead of the adjective *duras*, hence modern interpreters generally translate *custodivi vias (viri) violenti* that is *custodivi me a viis viri violenti*. This translation is forced. The verb *shamar* means 'to observe a law' not 'to abstain from evil'. A far better sense is obtained by referring the word *paris*, which is usually used of robbers and murderers, to Accadian *parsu* 'command, order, law', or to Arabic *fard* 'divine law'. The sense then will be *ego custodivi vias legis*, and this is the translation adopted in the new Psalter. This new meaning of the Hebrew word *paris* has been proposed by G. R. Driver in 1922 (12), and is accepted by F. Zoreil (1928), N. Peters (1930), C. Lattey (1939) in their respective translations of the Psalms.

Ps. 31, 9 *camo et freno maxillas eorum constringe* the Hebrew word for *maxillas* is referred to an Arabic root meaning 'course', hence the new Psalter reads *quorum impetus camo et freno constringitur*. So also G. R. Driver (13), Zorell (14), Calles (15), Peters (16).

(11) P. Dhorme, *L'Emploi métaphorique des noms des parties du corps en hébreu et en accadien*, Paris, 1923, pp. 18f.

(12) *The Journ. of Theol. St.*, 23 (1922) 72. See also *J.T.S.* 24 (1923) 318; 25 (1924) 177f.

(13) *J.T.S.* 43 (1942) 153.

(14) *Psalterium ex Hebraeo Latinum*, Rome, 1928, p. 49.

(15) *Le Livre des Psaumes*, Paris, 1936, I, p. 350.

(16) *Das Buch der Psalmen*, Paderborn, 1930, p. 70.

Ps. 56, 9 *Exurge gloria mea* : the Hebrew word for *gloria* is referred to a root which in Arabic means 'liver' and, metaphorically, 'the innermost part of man, heart', and we therefore read *Exurge anima mea*. So also Zorell, *Ca'es*.

Ps. 77, 21 *et ira ascendit in Israel* : though the sense is fairly clear, it is much clearer in the new translation which reads *et ira efferbuit contra Israel*. The Heb. verb '*ala*, generally translated 'to rise up', in reality represents two roots with two different meanings 'to rise up' and 'to boil'.

Ps. 83, 7 *in valle lacrimarum, in loco quem posuit* : limiting ourselves to the first half-verse, the other half being mistranslated, we notice that the translators of the Psalter have derived the word *baka* from a root which, though inexistent in our Hebrew Dictionaries (17), occurs in Arabic and means 'to be waterless (land)'. The whole verse is therefore translated : *Transeuntes per vallem aridam, fontem facient eam.*

It has been said above that the Greek translators have frequently rendered the Hebrew tenses wrongly. Hebrew, unlike Greek and Latin, has a very rudimentary system of moods and tenses, and the same tense-form may have different temporal values depending on the quality of the action expressed, on the different vocalization of the so-called *waw consecutive* and other grammatical considerations. A literal and servile translation, which does not take into account the various phonetical, grammatical and contextual factors determining the exact value of the tenses is, naturally, apt to misrepresent the original writer's mind by disrupting the logical nexus and sequence of his thoughts and sometimes even distorting the sense intended by him. But the translators of the new Latin Psalter, more conscious than their early predecessors of the value of the Hebrew tense-forms, have also been more successful in expressing the different time relations of the verbal forms thus eliminating another cause of obscurity in our Vulgate Psalms. The following verses from Ps. 103 in the old and in the new translation will illustrate the different ways of rendering the tenses. In these verses the Psalmist is describing the wonderful works of creation.

(17) With the exception of F. Zorell *Lexicon Hebraicum et Aramaicum Veteris Testamenti*, Rome, 1940 (in progress).

Abyssus sicut vestimentum amictus eius :
super montem stabunt aquae	super montes steterunt aquae.
Ab increpatione tua fugient :	Increpante te fugerunt,
a voce tonitruī tui formi- dabunt.	te tonante trepidarunt.
Ascendunt montes, et descen- dunt campi	Ascenderunt montes, descen- derunt valles
in locum quem fundasti eis.	in locum quem statuisti eis.
Terminum posuisti, quem non transgredientur :	Terminum posuisti, quem non transgrediantur,
neque convertentur operire terram.	ne iterum operiant terram.
Qui emittis fontes in conval- libus :
inter medium montium per- transibunt aquae.	qui manant inter montes.
Potabunt omnes bestiae agri;	Potum praebent omni bestiae agri;
expectabunt onagri in siti sua.	onagri extinguunt sitim suam.
.....
Ut educas panem de terra :
et vinum laetificet cor hominis :	et vinum quod laetificet cor hominis;

If a sound knowledge of both the lexical and grammatical element of Hebrew is essential for the comprehension of the original writer's sense, a clear, smooth and unambiguous rendering is not less important for its intelligibility in another language. Under this respect too the Old Latin version of the Psalms, which is reproduced substantially in our Vulgate Psalter, falls a long way short of the standards of a clear and readable translation. Apart from the fact that the earliest Latin translations were made at a time when the classical age of Latin literature had long passed away to give place to that form of provincial Latin which Cicero and Quintilian labelled as *Asianus* or *Asiaticus*, it must be also borne in mind that those early Latin translators were illiterate men writing not in the more refined style of the African writers Tertullian, Minutius Felix, Cyprian and others, but in that form of everyday's speech which is referred to by Cicero and Quintilian as *sermo plebeius, rusticus, quotidianus*. It thus hap-

pened that many words, meanings and constructions that were current in those times became unintelligible to the modern reader to whom the classical forms are certainly more familiar.

In order to obviate this defect the translators of the Latin Psalter have preferred the more polished style and language of the classical period. There were some, it is true, who advocated strongly the use of that form of Latin which is known as 'Church Latin', the Latin used during the first centuries of the Church and which has been ever used in its daily service (18). But their reasons were perhaps more sentimental than practical. If a more intelligible translation of the Psalms was needed, it was imperative that it should be made in that form of Latin with which the young ecclesiastics, after their classical studies, had become familiar. It has been objected that a translation of the Psalms in the classical Latin of Cicero was an anachronism (19). It would have been an anachronism had it been made in the 2nd or 3rd centuries when a new form of Latin was developing in the Roman provinces under the combined influence of new Christian doctrines and different literary standards. But to-day in view of the fact that, rightly or wrongly, our ecclesiastics are more at home in classical than in ecclesiastical Latin, there is no reason why the Church, which is a universal institution, should adopt a provincial form of Latin instead of the classical form which has ever been the standard form of Latin. The translators have therefore very wisely conformed, so far as it was possible, to classical usage both in the selection of words as well as in the grammatical construction. The following examples illustrate the literary method of the translators :

a) Words belonging to the late Latin, or that are servile renderings of Greek mistranslations are generally replaced by classical equivalents. A typical example is the verb *confiteri* and its derivative *confessio*. Naturally the word recalls to our mind, as it did to the Christians of St. Augustine's time (20), the sacramental confession. But *confiteri* is the literal translation of the Greek *exomologeisthai* 'to confess' which is one of the meanings of the Hebrew verb *hoda(h)*, and the one which in many cases

(18). See A. Bea, *La nuova traduzione latina del Salterio*, Biblica 26 (1945) 221.

(19). Christine Morrmann in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 1 (1947) 116.

(20) S. Aug. In Ps. 137; PL 37, 1774; etc.

does not suit the context. The proper meaning required by the context is 'to praise'. Hence the Greek verb *exomologeisthai* acquired a new meaning which passed on to the Latin *confiteri* 'to praise'. This meaning is utterly unknown in Latin even in the late and medieval periods. Both the verb *confiteri* and the noun *confessio* have now been eliminated from the Psalter, and so we read *Celebrate Dominum* instead of *Confitemini Domino* (104, 1; 105, 1; 106, 1); *Majestas et decor* for *confessio et magnificentia* (Ps. 95, 6). The words 'protectio' and 'protector' are used instead of 'susceptio' 'susceptor'. A synonymous word of *susceptio* is *assumptio* which is used in the same sense of *protectio*, and is generally rendered 'clipeus' (88, 19). *Subsannare* 'to laugh at' belongs to the vulgar language and has been replaced by the more classical *illudere*, *ludibrium*. Other words which have been eliminated are *eructare* in the sense 'to utter'; *iustificaciones* 'precepts'; *praeparare* and *praeparatio* in the sense of 'to found, foundation' as in Ps. 23, 2; *sine causa* 'in vain' as in Ps. 72, 13; *sanctificium* for *sanctuarium*; and the Greek words *clerus*, *ecclesia*, *episcopatus* 'office', *diabolus* 'adversary', *neomenia* 'new moon' and many others.

b) In the construction of sentences the translators have followed the classical standards. The *quod*-clauses, which feature so conspicuously in the Latin of Theology, are replaced by the more regular infinitive clauses, thus we read *existimasti me esse similem tui* instead of *existimasti quod ero similis tui* (49, 21). In 26, 13 *credo visurum me bona Domini* the future infinitive is certainly preferable to the present infinitive of the Vulgate *credo videre bona Domini*.

c) The use of particles, which is strongly influenced by the underlying Hebrew text, has also been reduced to the classical standards. Thus verbs expressing an internal feeling such as *laetari*, *exultare* take the ablative with *de* instead of the ablative with *in* which is a well-known Hebraism. The preposition *in* has been omitted when it represents the *b* of instrument, e.g. 43, 4 *neque enim gladio suo occupaverunt terram*; when it is used redundantly to denote time or place, e.g. 5, 8 *ingrediar (in) domum tuam*; 33, 1 *Benedicam Domino (in) omni tempore*.

d) Ungrammatical and servile renderings have been given a perfectly regular turn of expression, e.g. 125, 1 *In convertendo Dominus captivitatem Sion, facti sumus sicut consolati*, this con-

struction is anything but Latin; the nominative *Dominus* has no syntactical function as there is no finite verb to which it can be referred as subject. In Greek the construction is perfectly regular but the word for *Dominus* is in the accusative as the subject of the infinitive *convertere*. The new translation reads thus: *Cum reduceret Dominus captivos Sion, fuimus sicut somniantes.*

But the Latin classical language with all its rich resources is unable to give expression to all the lofty ideas of the inspired Psalm-writers. Classical Latin was the language of a heathen people, while the Psalms, as all the rest of the Bible, are all permeated by the idea of one God, a living God, a just and merciful God who punishes sin and saves man from perdition. Hence many ideas characteristic of the true religion, such as the ideas of salvation, redemption, reconciliation, sin, penance etc. could not be adequately expressed by the language of Greece or Rome. Thus, for example though neither *salvator* nor *salvare* belong to the classical language and though Cicero himself is reluctant to use the word *salvator* for the Greek *soter* (Verr. 4, 63), both words have become part and parcel of the Latin Christian language. The same with *redemptor*. Its classical meaning is 'contractor'. But St. Jerome frequently uses it in the sense of 'redeemer'. This meaning has now become common in Christian literature and has acquired an inappellable claim to recognition. Both *salvator* and *redemptor* have been retained in the new translation. Other words which have been retained are: *psallere*, *confidere in aliquo*, *cornu* or *cornu salutis*, *via* in the sense of 'way of living'.

There still remains one more point to be considered, namely the poetical structure of the Psalms as it is reproduced in the Latin translation. All are agreed that the Psalms are written in verse, but opinions widely differ on the nature of Hebrew poetry, whether it is metrical or simply rhythmical. The translators have purposely abstained from proposing any metrical theory, but have arranged the text on the grounds of parallelism, the characteristic feature of Hebrew poetry. Verses are divided into two or three stichi according to the law of parallelism, independently of the number of stressed syllables in each stichos. Following this principle the translators have in many cases given a verse-division different from, and better than, that with which we are familiar. Thus Ps. 29, 9 is re-arranged and translated thus:

Facere voluntatem tuam Deus me delectat,
et lex tua est in praecordiis meis.

As a result of this verse-division based on parallelism certain disharmonious half-verses consisting of single words as *super-
vacue* (24, 4), *potentissime* (44, 4) have disappeared.

This apparent indifference to metrical theories has provoked some adverse criticism (21), which seems to be altogether unjustified. It is very well known how precarious all such theories are and how inopportune it is to force the Hebrew songs into the Pro-custean bed of metrical and strophic structure. That Hebrew poetry is rhythmical none will deny; it is also agreed that rhythm is governed by certain definite rules, but any attempt to discover these rules in the poems of the Bible may be considered as a forlorn hope owing to corrupt state of the Hebrew text and to the fact that the Hebrew poets allowed themselves a greater freedom in the use of rhythmical devices than their modern readers are inclined to recognize. As an example of different views we may mention Fr. Zorell and Fr. Lattey. Both are convinced metrists; they are both authors of a translation of the Hebrew Psalms, but in the metrical arrangement of the translation they differ from one another in more than one case. Thus vv 5 and 6 of Ps. 4 are arranged by Fr. Zorell so:

Trascimini, sed nolite peccare!
recolite hoc super cubile vestrum et considerate,
Sacrificate sacrificia iustitiae,
et sperate in Domino.

Fr. Lattey gives a different disposition:

Tremble and sin not; speak with your heart
upon your bed, and be still:
sacrifice sacrifices of justness, and trust in Jehovah.

Another different arrangement is given by Cales in his two-volume commentary on the Psalms. In such a variety of opinions it would have been unwise to arrange the text on the basis of debatable theories, especially in view of the fact that this translation is intended to meet the needs of those who recite the Breviary rather than to solve the problem of Hebrew prosody.

(21) See, for example, C. Lattey in *Scripture*, Oct. 1945, p. 9; Lattey's metrical structure of the Psalms in his translation *The Psalter in the Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures*, 1945, has been criticized by T. E. Bird in *Scripture* 1 (1946) 16f.

I have tried to bring out the main features of this new Latin translation of the Psalms which is unquestionably an outstanding achievement of Catholic Biblical scholarship. But in a work like this involving countless problems of textual criticism, Semitic philology and exegesis it is but natural to expect that the reader will express different views on a number of points. I have noticed a few passages which call for some remarks.

Ps. 7, 5 reads thus :

Si attuali amico meo malum,
qui salvavi adversantes mihi iniuste :
Insequatur inimicus animam meam etc.

The insertion of the relative clause *qui salvavi* between the apodosis and the protasis of a conditional sentence, though syntactically correct, is certainly stylistically very awkward. In Hebrew that clause is simply coordinated with the protasis *si attuli* so that the sense is *si attuli... et salvavi... insequitur*. The difficulty against this construction is that it would make the pious Psalmist call evil upon himself for having rescued his enemy. If one is unwilling to admit this sense, one can translate the second verb of the Hebrew text by *exspoliavi* instead of *salvavi*, a rendering which is perfectly possible and is accepted by many recent interpreters. I should therefore translate :

Si attuli amico meo malum,
aut exspoliavi eum qui iniuste adversabatur mihi :
Insequatur etc.

Ps. 14, 4c *Qui, etsi iuravit cum damno suo, non mutat*. This is the usual rendering of Heb., and the sense is that the righteous man keeps his oaths even when they prove to be to his own disadvantage. But the rendering of LXX, which is also that of Syr. and Vulg., *Qui iurat proximo suo et non decipit* is easier, simpler and more suitable to the context, and should therefore have been preferred to MT. The LXX-Vg. reading is preferred by Briggs (22), Lattey.

Ps. 72, 7 *Prodit ex crasso corde iniquitas eorum, erumpunt figmenta mentis* : instead of *iniquitas eorum* MT reads *oculi eorum*. As this reading yields a good sense there is no reason for preferring LXX. I should therefore translate : Their eyes, i.e. their looks, come out of a puffy face, and their evil thoughts are

(22) *The Psalms* (The International Critical Commentary).

manifest therefrom. So also Zorell, Cales, Schmidt (23), Driver (24).

Ps. 105, 15 *tubem immisit eis* for Vulg. *misit saturitatem in animas eorum*. It has already been remarked that the Hebrew word *nephesh*, besides its usual meaning 'soul', has also a secondary meaning 'throat'. This meaning, which has been admitted in several cases, must be admitted in Ps. 105, 15 also, and I would therefore translate: *Concessit eis petitionem eorum, et misit (cibum) mortiferum in fauces eorum*. The referenece is to the Israelites' lust for flesh in the wilderness. Their lust was satisfied, but they had to pay for it by their lives. The same meaning must be recognised also in Ps. 106, 9: *Quia satiavit ventrem famelicum, et ventrem esurientem replevit bonis*, instead of *animam famelicam, et animam esurientem*; *venter*, of course, being a synonym of *fauces*. Likewise in v. 18 of the same Psalm I would read *omnem escam fastidiunt fauces eorum* the throat being considered as the seat of appetite.

Now I suppose one would like to know whether the new Psalter will be made obligatory for those who recite the Breviary. I dare say that it will not, at least for the time being. The older editions of the Breviary must be sold out before new editions are printed. But I believe that the new Psalter will become universal before it is made obligatory. So far as one can see it had a favourable reception in Malta, and a number of priests have already adopted it in their private recitation of the office. In the next ten years that number will have increased considerably, while the number of the partisans of the old Psalter is bound to decrease. Supposing the new Psalter had the same reception in other countries, one may hope that in the next ten or twenty years it will have dominated the liturgical service to such an extent that its official imposition by the Pope will be only the recognition of an accomplished fact.

(23) *Die Psalmen* (Handbuch zum alten Testament), Tübingen, 1934.

(24) *J.T.S.* 45 (1943) 12.