

ing that leads to God? Is nihilism structurally really more related to genuine faith than to religion, as Miskotte maintains? We should probably not say that this is never so, but to generalize with Miskotte is certainly too dangerous. What "genuine" nihilist has ever realized his supposed potential and turned to faith? Furthermore, Miskotte sees religion from a too one-sided (Barthian) perspective. To identify religion with godlessness as the other side of nihilism (p. 23) is too undifferentiated. It seems that one cannot and should not group together religion as the glorification of culture or even the National Socialism of the Third Reich with the level of the religious experience of the nature and culture of a child. The indiscriminate picturing of religion in utterly negative terms is an inadequate way of speaking of religion. This is not to deny that there is false religion and religiosity in Christianity, but there is also true religion. We must be more articulate in speaking of religion. As a result of these reflections this reviewer is less satisfied than Miskotte with a number of philosophers who seek God in all directions. We would very much like to hear the "I am Yahweh" not only as regards the meaning of its words but also as regards its ontological value where man comes into true being.

This significant book is worth living with for a long time and grows in stature with reading and rereading.

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Orlinsky, Harry M., ed. *Notes on the New Translation of The Torah. A Systematic Account of the Labors and Reasoning of the Committee That Translated The Torah.* Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1969. vi + 288 pp. \$ 6.00.

Since 1962 the Jewish Publication Society of America (JPS) has put the scholarly world in its debt for its extraordinary translations of *The Torah: The Five Books of Moses*, according to the traditional Hebrew text, and of *The Five Megilloth and Jonah*. It has done so again by making public in a systematic and thorough way the decisions, philosophies, and principles of translation which guided the committee that translated *The Torah*. Most of the existing notes that governed committees of Bible translators are fragmentary, old, or out-of-print, and those which are accessible in libraries (e.g., Max L. Margolis' anonymous article on the making of the 1917 semi-official translation of The Holy Scriptures by JPS entitled "The New English Translation of the Bible," and found in the *American Jewish Year Book*, XIX [1917/18], 164-193) are certainly not available in sufficient number to satisfy the needs of any but the smallest group of interested scholars. If only for this all-important reason, laymen and students alike will welcome this indispensable companion volume to the study of the New Jewish Version (NJV) Torah edited by Harry M. Orlinsky, Professor of Bible at the Hebrew Union College — Jewish Institute of Religion, New York, and editor-in-chief of *The Torah*.

The history of Jewish translations of the Hebrew Bible into English

is fascinating. Since 1787 when the English scholar David Levi translated the Pentateuch into English, Jews have participated independently and in collaboration with others in producing English versions of part and at times of all the Hebrew Scriptures. None of these versions, which include M. Friedlander's *Kitvei HaKodesh, The Jewish Family Bible* (1884), and C. G. Montefiore's *Bible for Home Reading* (1896-1901), entirely escaped the particular nuances of the Protestant Authorized and Revised Versions which served in the main as English literary types for the Jewish translations. It was with the intent of avoiding the Christian overtones of the AV upon a Jewish reading public that Rabbi Isaac Leeser of Philadelphia undertook to translate anew the Hebrew Bible from the original sources and in full light of Jewish tradition (1853). His translation, though widely circulated in American synagogues and homes for liturgical and educational use, was within 50 years deemed archaic in diction and inadequate in translation. In 1898, the JPS, the first publication house in the United States to publish in popular form books of Hebraica and Judaica, and co-founded by Leeser, commissioned a board of editors headed by M. Jastrow, editor-in-chief, and K. Kohler and F. de Sola Mendes, associate editors, to prepare a completely revised standard Bible for Jews in English-speaking lands. The much-heralded translation appeared in 1917 under the then general editorship of Max L. Margolis, and it continues to enjoy favorable acceptance by a wide audience of English-reading Jews.

However, significant advances in Bible scholarship, including Biblical archaeology before and after World War II, have broadened our knowledge of the ancient Israelite *Weltanschauung* and have rendered inaccurate hundreds of passages in the JPS version of 1917. At the Society's annual meeting in 1953, Professor Orlinsky convincingly advanced the argument for an updated Bible translation in English for the Jewish people, and in 1962 *The Torah* appeared as volume one of the NJV. This has since been revised.

The present publication of *Notes on the New Translation of The Torah* represents an epoch-making and monumental step forward in the history of Bible translations. Such a literary endeavor assumes, correctly as far as this reviewer is concerned, that there exists a large, interested audience that can profit from such comments. Its availability makes the literary quality of the Pentateuch further accessible to the modern reader.

Among the many good features of the volume are a lengthy introduction which summarizes the ages of Bible translation and the philosophy of the old and new JPS versions; a very useful bibliography which includes important Hebrew publications often overlooked by the Biblical scholar; a list of terms and abbreviations employed in the numerous footnotes to *The Torah* and in the text of the *Notes*; a solid English transliteration including stress marks of the Hebrew employed, which aids the uninitiated reader in a proper reading of the Hebrew, and thorough indices of authors, subjects, words, Biblical

passages, and rabbinical references cited. The main body consists of sensible discussions of the many departures employed by the translation committee of the NJV Torah from the traditional renderings used in the JPS version of 1917 and other translations. The translation committee, headed by Orlinsky as editor-in-chief and assisted mainly by H. L. Ginsberg and the late E. A. Speiser, was guided by a number of significant features including the use of intelligible, contemporary diction; the full use of classical Jewish commentaries, unfortunately wanting in many contemporary translations; and a generous appeal to extra-Biblical sources which shed light on the scriptural text. The eye-pleasing format of the book, its comprehensive grasp of basic, relevant Bible problems, and its mastery of the data that have preceded it contribute in making the *Notes* a well-balanced and informative introduction to the text and versions of the Torah which will certainly generate future imitations.

Any student, critic, and lay person who has ever battled with the complexities of the original Hebrew "of the single most significant book in the Jewish tradition" must conclude that scholars who are nursed in the prophetic faith and are at home in *all* phases of the Hebrew language and culture can best interpret the niceties and nuances of Hebrew Scriptures, a national-religious literature, to a sympathetic outside world. Many readers will be delighted to note that the basic position of the translation committee does not lead to heavy theologizing but succumbs to the best traditio-historical-critical methodology which exposes to a greater Bible audience the profound gratitude that modern scholarship must pay to the philological insights of rabbinical exegesis; namely, the Talmudim, the Targumim, Saadia Gaon (d. 942), Rashi (d. 1105), Rashbam (d. about 1174), Abraham Ibn Ezra (d. 1167), Radak (d. 1235), Ramban (d. about 1270) Ralbag (d. 1344), Obadia Sforno (d. 1550), Shadal (d. 1865), and Malbim (d. 1879).

Properly speaking, the editors leave to the reader the important task of seeking personal and universal values from the Bible. They avoid dealing with questions raised by contemporary and historical schools of expositors who are guided by doctrinal principles, e.g., does Gen 1-3 contain the doctrines of *Creatio Ex Nihilo*, the Trinity, and Original Sin? The translation committee is highly competent in the morphology and lexicography of the text. The pronouns *thou*, *thee*, *ye* in regard to man and Deity and such medieval verbal forms as *wast*, *art*, *shalt* are avoided, since no special form of address and variant of "to be" are used in classical Hebrew. The *yam sūf* is literally translated as "Reed Sea." There is an appreciation for the correct usage of the conjunction *waw* and the *waw* consecutive. The Hebrew particles *pen*, *lāmmāh*, *hinnēh*, *lakēn*; the conjunction *kî*; the preposition *lipnē*; the adjective *kol*; and the expressions *be-yôm* and *le-kol* are explained idiomatically, grammatically, and in full regard to the original passage. Common Biblical words as *nepes*, *šalôm*, *šadaq*, *bayit*, *ʿeres*, etc., are not mechanically translated into English. There

is a conscientious effort to present before the reader the special nuance of the word in its contextual meaning. Thus Biblical *ša'ar* may mean not only "gate," but "court," "settlement," "public square," and, we may add, "place of religious assembly." The wide range of meaning that the Hebrew substantive and verbal forms may express is shown. The *Notes* offer a particular service to lay reader and scholar alike by indicating the presence of merismus and hendiadys in the Biblical text. Improvements over previous translations are advanced by the avoidance of "hebraisms" in the translation; establishing new thought units by the combination of subordinating clauses and the avoidance of conventional chapters and verses, *i.e.*, the system imposed by Stephen Langton (d. 1228), Archbishop of Canterbury, on the Latin Vulgate text for the purpose of missionary work among the Jews; the use of numerals in the reproduction of lists and series of numbers; and the courage to break with the more than two-thousand-year-old Septuagint tradition of word-for-word translation. Finally, the Biblical expressions are noted: poetry, prophecy, torah, wisdom, story, song, riddle, historical narrative, letter, and treaty. This reflects, of course, the pattern of *The Torah*.

Where so much insight to Jewish exegesis has been given it seems ungrateful to ask for more, but it would have greatly aided the general reading public if material explaining in depth the pedagogical principles of the medieval Jewish commentator were provided. The importance of the medieval Jewish exegete for Biblica in general and for Biblical lexicography in particular is remarkably shown in the *Notes*. This underscores once again the necessity for the seminaries to initiate classes for the serious Bible student in the reading and understanding of rabbinic scholarship, in addition, we may add, to classes in modern Hebrew. Some scholars will find fault with *The Torah* and the *Notes* and maintain that archaic English (*e.g.*, "to wife" in Gen 25:30) and misinterpreted Hebrew phrases (*e.g.*, "the hardened heart of Pharaoh") are not infrequently found in the texts. But what of it? The translation committee, aware perhaps of Rabbi Judah's contempt for Bible translations (*cf.* BT Kiddushin 49a), sought not a literal rendition but a meaningful unit-for-unit translation. Furthermore, is it not axiomatically recorded by Jesus ben-Eliezer ben-Sira that what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have the same sense when translated into another tongue? There are so many pluses found, as, for example, the wise decision to transliterate morphemes<sup>1</sup> and units of speech of unknown meaning (*e.g.*, *qesitāh* in Gen 33:19; *'abrēk* in Gen 41:43; *'ehyēh-<sup>2</sup>ašer-<sup>2</sup>ehyēh* in Ex 3:14, etc.) that the volume is of unquestionable value. A well deserved *yēš lāhem kō'ah* to the committee of translators; may they go from strength to strength in their objective to translate and annotate the whole of the Hebrew Bible.