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RESTORING THE ORIGINAL MEANING: JEWISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Abstract: Among dozens of new translations of the New Testament published in the last fifty years, there are several versions by Jewish scholars which have yet to receive enough attention. This article offers an analysis of the most characteristic features of these translations, such as criticism of the existing versions outlined in the introductory sections, as well as actual techniques by which the Jewish origin and character of the text is emphasised in three spheres: superficial, cultural and religious, and theological. Each of these is illustrated with numerous examples, juxtaposed with traditional versions. It is argued that, regardless of the ideological motivation underlying the origin of the Jewish translations of the New Testament, they offer valuable and otherwise unavailable insights into the original message of the ancient Christian writings.

Keywords: New Testament, Jewish translation, ideology, original meaning, restoration

Introduction

None of the surviving texts of Antiquity can surpass the Bible in terms of translation: the sheer number of existing versions, their diversity, and the rate at which new ones are produced are all unparalleled. This is particularly visible in English-speaking circles, where published Bible translations come literally in the hundreds, the exact numbers being hard to determine; many of those translations come from the last few decades.¹ It would also be difficult to find another text whose translations represent so wide an array of methodological approaches, ranging from strict literalness to almost

¹ When researching the English translations of the New Testament published between 1946 and 2004, I came across sixty-two published versions (Blumczyński 2006a).

total freedom, with countless variants in between. The reasons behind this profusion of Bible translations have yet to be sufficiently accounted for. Generally speaking, “the multiplicity of translations seems to result from the perceived inadequacy of existing versions” (Szczepińska 2005: 7).² However, it seems unlikely that dozens of new Bible translations would appear in the lifespan of just one or two generations because of purely (or even mainly) linguistic objections. Rather, the existing versions are often perceived as inadequate from an ideological standpoint.³ Among the ideological stimuli for a number of contemporary translations of the New Testament (hereafter: “NT”), especially in the North American context, is the broad and internally diversified movement of political correctness, which has produced various “gender-neutral,” “gender-inclusive” and feminist versions (Blumczyński 2006b). This, of course, does not account for all the new translations. This paper will focus on another, less researched, but no less interesting group of ideologically-driven NT translations: those recently produced in Jewish circles.

Let us start by clarifying the notion of “Jewish translations.” It can refer to both (1) translations authored by Jewish scholars and (2) aimed at a Jewish audience; typically (but not always) these two criteria overlap. Christian translations (that is, *per analogiam*, those prepared by and predominantly for Christians) obviously fall outside this category, though it must be noted that many of them currently try to revert the negative portrayal of Jews in the New Testament, resulting from translating the Greek *Ioudaioi* as “Jews.” In John’s Gospel this term refers to the opponents of Christ and therefore has a strong negative connotation. Since etymologically the word *Ioudaios* is connected with Judea, it is better to translate it as “Judean,” emphasising the geographical and ethnic rather than the religious aspect. This solution is advocated by Michał Wojciechowski, who points out that “using the term ‘Jews’ overemphasises (...) the metaphorical sense at the expense of the historical one, directs the polemic towards Jews in general and encourages negative stereotyping” (1993: 81). We shall return to this later, but note that the pro-Jewish emphasis (or – depending on one’s point of view – the effort to eliminate an anti-Jewish bias) is becoming increas-

² Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations from non-English sources are translated by Paulina Drewniak.

³ Throughout this paper “ideology” is to be understood in a non-evaluative manner, as “a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ideology>).

ingly widespread and is no longer confined to the typical Jewish translations which we analyse below.

In the last fifty years at least five translations of the NT by Jewish scholars have been published in English. These were, chronologically: Hugh Schonfield's *The Authentic New Testament* (hereinafter: "ANT," 1955)⁴ and its thoroughly revised version *The Original New Testament* ("ONT," 1985), then *God's New Covenant* ("GNC," 1989) by Heinz W. Cassirer, *Jewish New Testament* ("JNT," 1989) accompanied by *Jewish New Testament Commentary* ("JNTC," 1992) by David H. Stern,⁵ and *The Scriptures* ("SISR," 1993), published by the Institute for Scripture Research.⁶

A critique of the existing translations of the New Testament

With the exception of Cassirer, who initially translated for private purposes with no intention of publication (Weitzman 1989: x) – which also partially explains the polemical angle of GNC – the Jewish translators in their forewords and introductions situate their works in opposition to the majority of existing versions. Their objections concern, first and foremost, the obscuring of what they consider the original – that is, true – message of the biblical text through Christian interpretation. Schonfield claims that "the records in the original simply do not read as they are reproduced to serve the spiritual needs of the Christian Faith" (1955: ix); moreover, through exposure to traditional translations "we have been accustomed to reading (...) a largely idealised interpretation created by the various schools of Christian faith and piety" (1955: ix), thus losing the original sense. Stern starts his introduction by observing matter-of-factly that "nearly all the other English translations of the NT presented its message in a Gentile-Christian linguistic, cultural and theological framework" (1998: xxxv), only to launch a much fiercer attack on Christian translations and translators:

⁴ Who introduced his work as "the first to give the Jewish sources their proper place in elucidating the text of the New Testament" (Schonfield 1955: x).

⁵ In 1998 Stern published his *Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B'rit Hadashah (New Testament)*, but because of the scope of this paper we will only discuss his version of the New Testament.

⁶ In addition, there are two Jewish adaptations of previous English translations, i.e. *The Book of Life* (Nashville, 1982) and *The Living Bible: Messianic Edition* (Wheaton, 1984) (Stern 1998: x); as these are not translations *sensu stricto*, however, they will not be included in this discussion.

A vicious circle of Christian anti-Semitism feeds on the New Testament. The New Testament itself contains no anti-Semitism; but since the early days of the Church, anti-Semitism has misused the New Testament to justify itself and infiltrate Christian theology. Translators of the New Testament, steeped in that anti-Semitic theology, produce anti-Jewish translations, even if they themselves are not anti-Semites. Readers of these translations absorb attitudes which are anti-Jewish and alien to Judaism (Stern 1998: xxxvii).

(Moreover, Stern blames the majority of existing NT translations for feeding the Jews' belief in the cultural and theological rupture between the Old and New Testaments, seeing it as the key reason why Jews *en masse* reject Jesus as the Messiah [1998: xxxvii–xxxviii], which indirectly reveals his evangelistic agenda).

A critique of traditional (i.e. Christian) versions accompanies each of the translations analysed here, albeit sometimes voiced indirectly. In some cases the critique is implied, as in the introduction to GNC: “There is no denominational bias, no ulterior motive, to sway the integrity of this translation” (Weitzman 1989: x),⁷ or as in SISR, which seeks to restore the proper sense of the commonly used terms “that do not accurately reflect the meaning of the original” (2003: xi). Insofar as the scope and the weight of criticism differ in each case, it is only by looking at the whole corpus of translations that we can see and understand the efforts of Jewish translators to restore the original message of the NT. As we will see, this proceeds by various methods.

Restoring the original message

1. Title

The emphasis on the “original” message presented by Jewish NT translations is manifested in their extended titles. Schonfield's translations are particularly verbose. The first is titled *The Authentic New Testament, Edited and Translated from the Greek for the General Reader*; its successor *The Original New Testament, Edited and Translated from the Greek by the Jewish Historian of Christian Beginnings* (subtitled on the cover as *A Radical*

⁷ Note that for Cassirer, who was baptised into the Anglican Church as an adult, an open critique of the reliability of Christian translations would have been somewhat unbecoming.

Reinterpretation and New Translation), and its newest American edition (1998) *The Original New Testament: The First Definitive Translation of the New Testament in 2000 Years*.⁸ Cassirer called his translation *God's New Covenant*, thus stressing the contextually correct sense of the polysemous Greek noun *diathēkē* (which can mean “alliance,” “pact,” “agreement,” as well as “testament,” i.e. “last will”) which refers to the first covenant God made with Israel. Stern’s version is titled *Jewish New Testament: A translation of the New Testament that expresses its Jewishness*. Finally, the SISR text is published as the *Messianic Scriptures*, as opposed to the *pre-Messianic Scriptures* (commonly known as the Old Testament).

These titles perfectly illustrate the translators’ pursuits to “reveal the authentic New Testament” (Schonfield 1955: ix), to demonstrate that “the New Testament is a thoroughly Jewish book” (Stern 1998: xiii), and to “affirm the Hebraic roots of the Messianic belief” (SISR 2003: xi). This is but a prelude to an array of translational and editorial interventions. Following Stern (1998: xxxviii–xxxix) we will divide them into three layers: (a) superficial, (b) cultural and religious, and (c) theological.

2. The superficial layer

Within the first layer we can identify “cosmetic changes from the usual renderings” (Stern 1998: xxxviii). However, to a reader accustomed to traditional versions these changes may appear neither “superficial” nor “cosmetic” – for instance when the familiar names Peter, Paul, Thomas, John, Jude, James and Mary are replaced by *Kefa*, *Sha’ul*, *T’oma*, *Yochanan*, *Y’hudah*, *Ya’akov* and *Miryam*,⁹ respectively (JNT). The most interesting

⁸ Promotional value aside, this solution is quite debatable, as Schonfield himself never aspired to any “definitive solutions,” as he clearly states in the forewords to both his translations. In the “Note on the title of this work” he declares: “I wish to make it quite clear that the title *The Authentic New Testament* is in no way intended to imply that my translation is the only genuine one. Manifestly any such suggestion would be both boastful and absurd. The term ‘authentic’ relates to the quality of the New Testament itself (... I have thought it better to employ an appropriate descriptive title, desiring to sink my own identity in that of the authors I was translating, so that the work might never be known as Schonfield’s New Testament” (1955: xii).

⁹ Stern comments as follows: “In English this Hebrew name is usually rendered by the spelling ‘Miriam’ in the Tanakh and ‘Mary’ in the New Testament. This unfounded and artificial distinction produced by translators subtly drives a wedge between Yeshua’s mother and her own Jewishness. The original Miriam was the sister of Moshe Rabbenu (...); in some respects she is seen as a role-model for the Jewish woman leader of today. But the name

aspect is how the name Jesus is handled, which reveals notable methodological differences between individual translations.

SISR is the most radical in its approach to “restore the Name of the Almighty to its rightful place in the text” (2003: xi). Their methodology is based on the ideologically understandable, but academically unverifiable belief that the text of the NT was originally inspired in a Semitic language (Hebrew or Aramaic), and that the surviving Greek manuscripts are merely translations. This view, paired with the belief that the post-exile practice of replacing God’s name (tetragrammaton YHWH) with euphemisms (*Elohim* or *Adonai*) was an act of apostasy, would suggest transliteration as the appropriate technique. However, due to lack of uniformity in representing Hebrew letters, the authors of SISR resorted to the Hebrew script in three cases. As a result, SISR matches the Greek nouns *theos* (God) and *kurios* (Lord), as well as the name *Iēsous* (Jesus) to their Hebrew equivalents and writes the first two as יהוה and the last as ישוע. All the other Hebrew proper names are transliterated, such as *Ēlijahu* (Elijah), *Yeshayahu* (Isaiah), *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem). In comparison, Stern’s translation also emphasises the Hebrew origins of the name Jesus, but he uses a version phonetically and orthographically assimilated to English (*Yeshua*). Schonfield’s and Cassirer’s versions use the traditional form *Jesus*.

The decision to transliterate Hebrew names automatically influences the titles of individual books in SISR and JNT. Combined with the former’s emphasis on restoring the original sense, it produces titles like *The Good News of Yeshua the Messiah, as Reported by Mattityahu* (the Gospel According to Matthew) or *The First Letter from Yeshua’s Emissary Sha’ul to the Messianic Community in Thessalonica* (The First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians). All translators abandon the traditional title *Letter to the Hebrews* and replace it with *Homily on the High Priesthood of Christ to Jewish Believers* (ANT, ONT), *A Letter Addressed to Readers of Hebrew Descent* (GNC), *To a Group of Messianic Jews* (JNT) and *Ibrim* (SISR).

Apart from the specific rendering of names, which phonetically resemble the original Hebrew, one of the most salient features of Jewish translations is reinterpreting (or, as its authors would say, restoring) the sense of numerous words and phrases – typically of Semitic or Greek origin –

‘Mary’ evokes in the reader’s thinking an otherworldly image of ‘Madonna and Child’, complete with halos, beatific smiles and angels in array, instead of the New Testament’s portrayal of a down-to-earth Jewish lady in an Israeli village managing her wifely, maternal and other social responsibilities with care, love and faith” (1992: 3).

which in the course of centuries absorbed connotations they did not have in the original context. And so, instead of “baptise” we have the literal *immerse* (ANT, ONT, JNT, SISR) and hence “John the Baptist” becomes *Yohanan the Immerser* (JNT, SISR); instead of “church” we find *community* (ANT, ONT), *messianic community* (JNT) or *assembly* (SISR); an “apostle” becomes an *emissary* (JNT, SISR) or *envoy* (ANT, ONT); “bishop” is replaced by *supervisor* (ANT, ONT, SISR) or *congregation leader* (JNT) and “deacon” by *shammashim* (JNT), *assistant* (SISR) or *administrator* (ANT, ONT). Such changes sometimes have confessional implications, but it seems they should be viewed as terminological amendments without a very serious impact on the message of the biblical text compared to Christian translations (as the latter also tend to differ in their use of confessionally marked terms; for instance, Catholic translations opt for “bishop” and “church,” whereas Protestant ones have “elder” and “congregation”). Perhaps this is why Cassirer ignores this aspect completely in his translation, and opts to retain the traditional Christian terms, such as *church*, *baptism*, *apostle*, *bishop*, etc.

Stern is probably right – at least with respect to his own work – that “although any one of these changes is superficial, the sheer quantity of them impresses on the reader that *B’rit Hadashah* is indeed a Jewish book, and this true and genuine effect is not superficial” (1998: xxxviii). Yet in order to accurately interpret the original sense and character of biblical texts the changes introduced in the next two layers are even more important.

3. The cultural and religious layer

Reconstruction here aims to stress the Jewishness of the religious and cultural context in which the events of the New Testament took place. An interesting example can be found in Matthew 6:19–24, when we compare the traditional Christian rendition (New International Version, hereinafter “NIV”) with Stern’s:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth (...) But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven (...). For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. (...) No one can serve two masters. (...) You cannot serve both God and money. (NIV, 2011)

Do not store up for yourselves wealth here on earth (...). Instead, store up for yourselves wealth in heaven.... For where your wealth is, there your heart will be also. 'The eye is the lamp of the body.' So if you have a 'good eye' [that is, if you are generous] your whole body will be full of light; but if you have an 'evil eye' [if you are stingy] your whole body will be full of darkness. (...) You can't be a slave to both God and money (JNT, 1989).

From a traditional translation it is difficult to infer what role exactly the eye metaphor plays in Jesus's teaching about treasures and money. JNT clarifies that having a "good eye" or a "bad eye" is a Semitic idiom signifying generosity and meanness respectively – which of course explains mentioning them while discussing an appropriate attitude towards earthly wealth. Interestingly, none of the other Jewish translations offers a similar interpretation of this passage, although some scholars confirm its accuracy (Harrington 1991: 101; Morris 1992: 153), or even decide in their own translations to abandon the Hebrew idiom altogether in favour of the descriptive phrase of a "generous" or "greedy" attitude (Hagner 1993: 157–158). Stern himself sees the passage as "another link in the chain of evidence that New Testament events took place in Hebrew" (1992: 32).

A large group of changes concerns Jewish customs and ceremonies. Some translations emphasise them strongly, for instance John's (10:22) phrase "Festival of Dedication" (New International Version) in both JNT and SISR is clearly identified as *Hanukkah*. JNT highlights other Jewish festivals either by using a phonetic rendering for assimilated Hebrew borrowings, e.g. *Pesach* (Passover), *Shabbat* (Sabbath) or by reintroducing transliterated Hebrew terms in place of their descriptive counterparts, e.g. *Sukkot* ("Festival of Tabernacles," NIV), *Shavu'ot* ("the day of Pentecost," NIV), *Hoshana Rabbah* ("the last and greatest day of the festival," NIV).

Even though all the Jewish translations favour Semitic names to some degree, JNT stands out with its use of "Jewish English," that is, "Hebrew and Yiddish expressions which many English-speaking Jews incorporate into everyday speech" (Stern 1998: xxxix). These expressions, italicised for the reader's convenience, can be found on the very first pages of the Gospels: Yeshua calls twelve *talmidim* (NIV: disciples), urges them to do *tzedakah* (NIV: practice righteousness), to endure *tsuris* (NIV: trouble) and to follow the example of the *tzaddiks* (NIV: the righteous), and his *s'mikhah* (NIV: authority) is envied by the *cohanim* (NIV: high priests). The author himself quite accurately predicts that "some readers may find this aspect of the translation unfamiliar or anachronistic and therefore exhausting or

jarring” (Stern 1998: xxxix). However, the technique is indeed very effective in achieving his main purpose, namely, showing the thoroughly Jewish character of the NT writings.

Among the important religious notions reconstructed in JNT, let us mention several Greek words, usually problematic in translation. *Graphē* (Scripture) is identified with *Tanakh*; *nomos* (NIV: law) with *Torah*; and *Christos* (NIV: Christ) is called *Messiah* or *Mashiach*.¹⁰ SISR goes back to the core meaning of the Greek adjective *hagios* and its Hebrew counterpart *kodesh* (NIV: holy) and translates it consistently as *set-apart*, which undoubtedly helps us to understand why the word is so commonly used of believers, especially by Paul, who reminds them that God sees them as “set-apart” and therefore obliged to lead exemplary lives. The clarification of religious notions borders on theological intervention, which we will consider next.

4. The theological layer

Compared to the above restoration strategies, interventions in the theological layer come across as relatively inconspicuous; some can be detected only through cross-comparison with Christian translations. And so, let us compare two versions of a passage often considered to be the most critical of the Jews in the entire NT. Paul in his First Letter to the Thessalonians (2:14–16) writes:

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from **the Jews, who both killed** the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost (NASB, 1995).

For, brothers, you came to be imitators of God’s congregations in Y’hudah that are united with the Messiah Yeshua – you suffered the same things from your

¹⁰ Incidentally, JNT never uses the word Christ – “because ‘Messiah’ has significance in the Jewish religion, tradition and culture, whereas the word ‘Christ’ has an alien ring and a negative connotation because of the persecutions Jews suffered from those claiming to be his followers” (Stern 1992: 2).

countrymen as they did from **the Judeans who both killed** the Lord Yeshua and the prophets, and chased us out too. They are displeasing God and opposing all mankind by trying to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles, so that they may be delivered. Their object seems to be always to make their sins as bad as possible! But God's fury will catch up with them in the end (JNT, 1989).

We have already mentioned that rendering *Ioudaioi* as "Jews" is erroneous, as it merges the geographical aspect with the religious and ethnic ones. As Wojciechowski observes: "The passage's anti-Semitic reputation is largely exaggerated, as it primarily concerns a specific group: the Judeans hostile to those who recognised Jesus as the Messiah" (1993: 85). Meanwhile, the Christian translation not only introduces a religious/ethnic reference in place of a geographical one, but also uses a non-defining relative clause. As a result, killing Jesus, hostility to all men and a full measure of sins are attributed indiscriminately to "the Jews" rather than to a specific group of Judeans in a specific moment in history.¹¹ This and similar translational misrepresentations, even if relatively few, "can certainly send the reader's thoughts in the wrong direction, perpetuating negative stereotypes, shared by both translators and readers, according to which Jews are enemies of Jesus, Christians and the Church" (Wojciechowski 1993: 87). Jewish translations therefore bring an important and much needed theological correction.

Jewish translators are understandably sensitive when it comes to passages commonly interpreted by Christians as referring to the "new covenant," according to which the Church replaces Israel as "God's chosen people," and Christianity supersedes Judaism. One of the most important such passages is Chapter 8 in the Letter to the Hebrews. Since it would be impossible to quote it extensively or even summarise properly here, let us focus on Stern's translation of the key part of verse 6 in comparison to a traditional version (New American Standard Bible, hereinafter "NASB"):

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which **has been enacted** on better promises (NASB, 1995, emphasis added).

But now the work of Yeshua has been given to do is far superior to theirs, just as the covenant he mediates is better. For this covenant **has been given as Torah** on the basis of better promises (JNT, 1989, emphasis added).

¹¹ This problem is extensively commented on by both Wojciechowski (1993) and Stern (2005: 844–846).

The essence of this seemingly minor change (the justification for which takes Stern six full pages of commentary) is the fact that the Greek verb *nenomothētai* – “to be established as a law” – is used with reference to the Torah, that is, the foundation of the covenant God made with Israel. This, in turn, means that the covenant represented by Jesus (Yeshua) less annuls than complements and builds upon the previous one. In this interpretation the New Testament does not abolish the Torah, but rather “has been given as Torah (...) The Torah has not been abrogated. Instead, the New Testament has been given the same status as the Torah of Moses; that is, it has come to have the highest authority there is” (Stern 1992: 687). This line of reasoning provides theological justification for Messianic Judaism, that is, for reconciling Jewish and Christian beliefs. However, it must also be noted that Stern’s exegesis is not shared by anyone else, a fact he himself notes with bitter disbelief (1992: 688–689).

This example also shows that Jewish NT translations are by no means unified in their theological alignment. The most important differences concern, of course, their doctrinal attitude towards Jesus, and hence towards the very foundations of Christianity. Messianic Jews, here represented quite accurately by Stern, see the Christian faith as an extension of Judaism, stressing its “old covenant” roots. Stern’s motivation was clearly apologetic; he openly acknowledges in the introduction to his work that “much of the commentary is intended to promulgate a Messianic Jewish approach to the Scriptures and to defend it, sometimes against non-Messianic Jewish viewpoints, sometimes against various Christian theological positions and sometimes against secular attitudes” (1992: xiii). Schonfield, on the other hand, focuses on the historical and the cultural aspects; his translation of the passages considered foundational for Christianity – for instance those traditionally associated with the doctrine of the Trinity – is theologically ambivalent (Blumczyński 2006a: 244–246), and does not attempt to reconcile Jewish and Christian beliefs. Their aims notwithstanding, what all these translators and their varying approaches share is the desire to restore the original message of the New Testament – and this will be our focus in the conclusion of this paper.

Summary and conclusions

Bible translations are usually divided into two main categories, based on formal or dynamic/functional equivalence. Those in the former group seek to provide the reader with the greatest possible access to the reality of the source text; those in the latter aim to make it possible for the reader to understand the source text's message in his or her own reality. An analysis of contemporary Jewish translations of the New Testament – even one as brief as the present – calls this binary opposition into question, or at least gives it new dimensions. We must agree with Jewish translators that the vast majority of existing translations based on formal equivalence do not represent the original message of the biblical text, but rather its Christian interpretation, sanctioned by centuries of ecclesial, theological and translational tradition, which in fact makes the Christian versions closer to those based on dynamic equivalence, that is, focused on the target reader at the expense of the source text. As a result, the New Testament is often read anachronistically, through the lens of much younger concepts and values. When we read “apostles,” “baptism,” “church” or even “salvation,” we more or less consciously understand them according to the contemporary meaning of these words, and therefore their original sense – closer, respectively, to *emissaries*, *immersion*, *community* or *deliverance/rescue* – is obscured in all aspects: historical, religious or even theological.

From a religious viewpoint we may, of course, assume, as historically established churches (such as the Roman Catholic Church) do, that a correct interpretation of the Scripture, the NT in particular, is dictated not only by an accurate reading of the original's message in its historical and cultural context, but also by the official Church tradition. In some situations, the Roman Church's “fuller sense” (*sensus plenior*)¹² exceeds the historical one (and in this sense challenges it), but even then a deeper understanding of the original sense of the NT would help, not hinder, the work of the Church's exegetes, theologians and committees.

¹² In the words of the Pontifical Biblical Commission “The fuller sense is defined as a deeper meaning of the text, intended by God but not clearly expressed by the human author (...) It is then a question either of the meaning that a subsequent biblical author attributes to an earlier biblical text, taking it up in a context which confers upon it a new literal sense, or else it is a question of the meaning that an authentic doctrinal tradition or a conciliar definition gives to a biblical text” (<http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/pcbinter.htm>; accessed on June 1, 2013).

There is an undeniable ideological motivation behind Jewish translations, including a desire to referentially “de-Christianise” the source text through a primarily historical and literary approach (ANT, ONT), or a will to emphasise the Judaist roots of Christianity, paired with an apologetic/evangelistic impulse (JNT, SISR). Depending on one’s ideology, these premises may be accepted or rejected. But ultimately the value of restoring the NT’s original sense through Jewish translations is, in my opinion, unquestionable. Perhaps they will help many readers to understand that *Christ* is not, as it is commonly believed, Jesus’ last name (!), but a culturally specific way of emphasising his role and authority through a reference to the ancient ritual of coronation.¹³

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¹³ Through anointing with oil. The Greek *christos* is an equivalent of the Hebrew *mashiach* (Messiah), which literally means “anointed” or “poured on” (Stern 1992: 1).

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