

THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT, edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Bruce Metzger and Allen Wikgren. *British and Foreign Bible Society*, 1966.

The object of the Bible Societies is to provide translations of the Bible into any of the vernaculars of the world. In order that these translations, which are all the time being extended into the remoter vernaculars (e.g. of Africa), shall be as accurate as possible, the British and Foreign Bible Society since 1958 embarked on a *Greek-English Diglot*, with a critically established Greek text of the NT (but without apparatus), and opposite a close translation into plain English, 'clear . . . accurate . . . unambiguous' (preface), as a guide to translators whose knowledge of Greek may be limited, whose own language may not be English, and whose interest is not in English idiom so much as in the possession of an unambiguous guide to the meaning. This *Diglot* 'for the use of Translators', originally printed 'for private circulation only', is now complete, and a similar OT project is under consideration.

This background is important for the appreciation of the edition under review. Since 1955 the American, Scottish and German Bible Societies, later joined by the British and Foreign (London) and Dutch Bible Societies, have set out to provide a careful Greek text of the NT specifically designed as a basis for the work of translators, with (unlike the *Diglot*) a critical apparatus 'restricted for the most part to variant readings significant for translators or necessary for the establishing of the text' (preface p. v.). This means that there are far fewer variants than in most critical editions, since many variants are variants of orthography or

precise Greek usage and do not in fact affect the meaning. For the close study of linguistic usage, therefore, the standard critical editions are still needed; but the advantages of this edition are, first, the selection of the variants that do affect the sense, and, secondly, the very much fuller attestation of these selected variants, from the codices, papyri, patristic citations, Byzantine lectionaries, editors and versions ancient and modern, than is found in the fuller critical texts. A further special feature is a system of estimation of the certainty (A), greater or less probability (B, C), or uncertainty (D), of the reading adopted in the text, compared to the readings in the apparatus. Another original feature is the separate apparatus for variants in punctuation (including, e.g. the question-mark) in different Greek editions and translations.

Within its 'calculated limitations' (preface p. vi) this edition has a special usefulness, and is not 'in competition with other modern editions' (preface p. vii), because of its selection of variants and its fuller attestation in each case. The eminent names of the editors, from Münster, St Andrews, Princeton and Chicago respectively, are sufficient warrant of the scholarship. Finally, the pleasant printing (in 'English' Greek type), a joint effort of Philadelphia and Württemberg, presentation and (smooth plastic) binding, make an attractive volume.

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THE PUZZLE OF I JOHN, by J. C. O'Neill. *S.P.C.K.*, 1966. 17s. 6d.

All who have commented on I John would agree that it cannot easily, if at all, be divided up in any convincing way, and that, as a piece of writing, it defies all classification. This in effect is the 'puzzle' of I John. Dr J. C. O'Neill suggests in the present work that we have gone wrong in reading I John as a continuous letter. Rather should it be classed as a tract made up

of a number of self-contained sections. One such easily discernible section is in 4: 1-6, or in 1: 1-4 which has been termed 'an apostolic prologue' (Schnakenburg). Dr O'Neill, however, goes much further and maintains that behind the text of I John as we have it can be discerned some twelve hymns or admonitions of purely Jewish origin and confection. The reason why