

“GUIDE TO THOSE WHO ARRESTED JESUS”

by ERIC F. F. BISHOP

IT is not only the general content of the New Testament story, but sometimes the text itself, that Mr. Bishop illuminates by his intimate knowledge of Palestinian usage.

IN the narrative of how Matthias succeeded to the Apostolate in the place rendered vacant through the treachery and end of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1: 15-26), there are two passages where most recent translators or editors recognise a parenthesis—the number of the Christian community at the time (verse 15) and the description of how the traitor met his end (verses 18, 19). These two parentheses make the speech of Peter on that occasion much more straightforward. Should not, however, the phrase in verse 16, “who was guide to those who arrested Jesus” (R.S.V.), be regarded as equally parenthetical? There are two reasons for this suggestion. First, it is most unlikely that any of the hundred and twenty would need to be told about the treacherous act in Gethsemane. Peter’s remarks to this group read much better with this phrase bracketed too. But it does contain information presumably needed by Theophilus, information which was only briefly communicated by Luke in the Gospel. Secondly, and more important, it is most unlikely that the Apostle would have referred to “Jesus” so baldly without the appellation of “Lord”, when mentioning Him in the circle of the believers. The omission of “Lord” is in keeping with the way in which Luke records facts for his reader(s), as in Acts 1: 1 or other historical allusions. But for the disciples the omission would appear unthinkable, as evident in verse 21 in reference to the ministry (where D adds “Christ”) and the prayer to our Lord in verse 24. In the first instance some old Arabic versions read *Sayyidna* (“our Lord”) just as Muslims or Christians do today when mentioning Jesus or any of the great prophets in the case of the former. In the second case *Rabb* is used, which has definite connotation of Deity; but in either case oriental courtesy, even apart from natural reverence, demands the appellation. The Apostle’s speech then would read in the N.E.B.:

. . . the prophecy in Scripture was bound to come true, which the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of David, uttered about Judas. The text I have in mind . . . is in the Book of Psalms.

Modern Arabic versions have *Ar-Rabb* in verses 21 and 24. St. Peter would not have forgotten himself to the extent of an omission of this kind in the circle of discipleship. St. Luke would seem to have appreciated this oriental "feel" once he was himself a member of the circle. For Christians in Arabic there may not be overmuch difference between *Rabb* and *Sayyid*. In John 21 the words seem stylistically interchangeable. The Palestinian *Maran* was soon the perquisite of the Christians round the Mediterranean. It might not come amiss if we were more generally oriental in references, spoken or written, to "the Lord Jesus".

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