

Θεοῦ υἱός,

*Matt.* xxvii. 54, and *Mark* xv. 39.

BY PROF. D. R. GOODWIN, D.D., LL.D.

IN translating these words, the Westminster revisers have put in their margins, "A Son of God."

Is there any good ground for suggesting such a translation? (1) Is it required by the words or the form of the Greek text? To this, but one answer can be made by any Greek scholar acquainted with the idiom of the New Testament. With a predicate in Greek, it is a well-known common usage to omit the article where, in English, we should either omit both our articles, or, if we used one, should use the definite and not the indefinite. And, in the New Testament, such an omission is still more general in the case of genitive constructions. Indeed, in exclamatory, impassioned, or highly elevated discourse, even the subject of the proposition is, in Greek, often shorn of the article, as in Luke i. 35: "Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and power of Highest shall overshadow thee."

For some among many instances in which this very phrase, Θεοῦ υἱός, means unquestionably "the Son of God," and is so translated by the revisers themselves without any marginal substitute, we may refer to what is added to the foregoing from Luke i. 35: "Wherefore also that which is born shall be called holy, the Son of God"; also to what appears just before the centurion's exclamation in St. Matthew at verse 43, and to Matt. xiv. 33, and John xix. 7. It cannot, therefore, be any special Greek scholarship which here calls for the translation of Θεοῦ υἱός by "a son of God."

(2) Does the character of the speaker in this particular case, or his state of mind, or his circumstances, or the context, require or suggest this special translation, — a translation which, for this phrase, stands alone in the revised New Testament?

In answer to this, it is to be observed, first, that according to St. Matthew, the centurion *and* they that were with him, seeing what had happened, uttered the exclamation. St. Luke says: "He glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." St. Mark says that the centurion, "When he saw that he so gave up the ghost, said, Truly this man was Θεοῦ υἱός." That is to say, some of the company may have uttered one exclamation and some another, or the centurion may himself have uttered both, his sentiment being, "Certainly this

was a just and true man, and therefore must be what he claimed to be, the very Son of God."

Secondly, it is to be observed that the centurion had had full opportunity of knowing what Jesus claimed to be, and had probably been long enough among the Jews to know what *they* understood to be meant by those claims, — whether they understood, or even Peter in his famous confession understood, all that we understand now (and *he* afterwards understood), by the words, Θεοῦ υἱός, it is not necessary here to discuss, especially not with the revisers. The centurion may not have been in the palace of the High Priest when Jesus, being adjured to tell whether he were "The Christ, the Son of the Blessed," "The Son of God," ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, answered: "I am" (Matt. xxv. 63-4; Mark xiv. 61-2); but there can be little doubt that he was in the Praetorium when the Chief Priests reported to Pilate what Jesus had said: "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God, Θεοῦ υἱός." Thus, in their reported version, they omit the articles; but this has not affected the translation of the revisers, nor have they put any "a son of God" in the margin. Nor could the centurion have forgotten that Pilate, having been already startled by the message from his wife early in the morning, beseeching him to "have nothing to do with that righteous man," when he now heard from the Chief Priests that Jesus made himself Θεοῦ υἱός, "was the more afraid," and from that time sought to release him.

Thirdly, it is to be observed that the centurion and they that were with him "were watching" Jesus, had been stationed to keep military guard over the scene of the crucifixion, and therefore must have seen and heard what was going on. They therefore must have heard those that passed by and railed at Jesus, wagging their heads, and saying: "If thou be the Son of God, υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, come down from the cross"; and the Chief Priests, taunting in their mockeries: "He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God, Θεοῦ υἱός." The centurion, therefore, knew both of the claims put forth for Jesus, that he was δίκαιος, "a righteous man," and that he was Θεοῦ υἱός, "the Son of God"; and, as we have said, he may fairly be presumed to have known what the Jews understood by both these expressions.

Fourthly, it might even be suggested that this centurion may, not improbably, have been like another centurion, — if he *was* another, — of whom our Lord declared that he had "Not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (Matt. viii. 10); or like him of whom we read in

the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. At all events, it is not to be presumed, of course, that a Roman centurion, stationed in Judea, was in pagan darkness.

But, finally, even if this centurion must be presumed to have uttered his words from the polytheistic point of view, the proper English of those words would no more be "a son of God" than "the Son of God"; but, "the son of a god." The point of distinction lies in the Θεός, not in the υἱός, nor in the article with either. The heathen demigods were not supposed to be "sons of God," but "*the* sons of some god." Hercules, for example, was not "*a* son of God," but "*the* son of a god"; and Aeneas was "*the* son of a goddess." Is it not high time that we should hear no more of this blundering marginal reading, "a son of God"? Shall its advocacy still be considered a mark of the highest and broadest scholarship?

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Τὸ λοιπόν, *Matt.* xxvi. 45.

BY PRES. THOMAS CHASE, LL.D.

THE following letter from the distinguished Greek scholar, Dr. August Böckh, received nearly thirty years ago, seems to me to deserve a wider reading than it has as yet had, and I have accordingly translated it for the JOURNAL.

"I take the liberty of answering your acceptable letter in German, in order to lay before you my view of the passage, *Matt.* xxvi. 45. You ask whether τὸ λοιπόν can here mean *hereafter, in future*, so that the passage should have the sense: 'Dormite et requiescite *alio, posteriori* tempore; *nunc* vero, surgite, eamus.' It is not to be denied that τὸ λοιπόν denotes a future time; notwithstanding, I must oppose the interpretation you mention. Τὸ λοιπόν is *the remaining* (das übrige); there is always presupposed by it a greater whole, of which a part is taken away; the remainder which is left after this subtraction is τὸ λοιπόν. Applied to time, τὸ λοιπόν is the remaining time which is left when one has taken off a definite preceding time; e.g., Plato, *Alk.* I. p. 103, B.: ἵν' δ' ἐπειδὴ οὐκέτι ἐναντιοῦται, οὕτω προσελήλυθα· εἴελπις δέ εἰμι καὶ το λοιπόν μὴ ἐναντιώσασθαι αὐτό. The whole from which a part is taken is here the time present, and running on till the time when Socrates says these words, together with the time following from that point; from this whole the time is taken