Donat Spiteri's Translation of Psalm 1,1-2 within the Translation Tradition of the Psalter in Maltese

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1.1 *Dedication*

I am writing this essay in order to honour the figure of Rev Prof Donatus Spiteri OFM Capp. who introduced me and the priests of my generation into the fascinating world of NT studies at the Faculty of Theology in the University of Malta. He introduced me also though indirectly into the world of bible translation when he gave me as an inheritance his copy of the classic by Eugene A. Nida & Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*[1] that formed generations of bible translators and professionals in the translation field. Prof Spiteri or as we affectionately know him, *Patri Donat il-Kappuċċin*, was not simply an academic, but he was also a pastor having been nominated parish priest of at least two parishes in two different periods, a Bible translator[2], and especially the translator of the biblical psalter in Maltese. He also succeeded Prof Carmel Sant as President of the Malta Bible Society for about nine years, founded the extremely popular *Kliem il-Ħajja*, through which many Maltese readers had their first close meeting with reading of the Bible. Though this latter institution that still exists under the editorship of another Capuchin, Rev Fr Martin Micallef, and the translation of the psalter which was adopted for her liturgy by the Roman Catholic Church, the indirect influence of Prof Spiteri upon religious life in Malta can hardly be exaggerated.

On a more personal note, when the present writer was elected as General Secretary of the Malta Bible Society, Patri Donat accepted to fill the role of President of the same institution, and in this way he was with the Bible Society when it passed through some exciting developments; Patri Donat was instrumental when the Bible Society acquired from the family of the deseased professor, the library of Mgr Prof Carmel Sant, when she found the necessary capital to buy her

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1. E.J. Brill, Leiden 1969.
2. Cfr Carmel Sant, *Il-Bibbja. Il-Kotba Mqaddsa bil-Malti*, Malta Bible Society, Malta 1984, Pre\entazzjoni, pp.ix-xi.

. current quarters, the *Dar il-Bibbja* in Floriana; when the MBS board decided that the Bible Society should publish the second edition of its Bible without the help of other institutions in Malta[3]; he formed part of the Bible Commission that prepared the text of the second edition which was then published under the editorship of the present writer in 1996. He formed part of the *Kummissjoni Biblika Permanenti* since its foundation in 2002.[4] He was also with the present writer when we solicited government officials to allow the New Testament with the title *L-Aħbar it-Tajba Għalik* to enter the religion syllabus of Public and Private secondary schools, a campaign which unfortunately failed because other Church agencies pushed their own book instead. These and other motivations are behind this essay which we hope will one day form part of a *Festscrift* which the Department of Holy Scripture at the Faculty of Theology, the Faculty of Theology itself, the Malta Bible Society, and the Foundation for Theological Studies, intend to dedicate to Rev Prof Donatus Spiteri OFM Capp. in the coming months.

1.2 *The Translation Tradition of the Psalter in Maltese*

No less than five translations form this tradition, spread over a period of more than one hundred sixty years. The first attempt at translating the biblical psalter in Maltese was done by Richard Taylor, a philanthropist and a prolific writer in the middle of the nineteenth century.[5] For Maltese orthography Taylor used that of J.B. Falzon. His work on the psalms was supposed to have been published in 1846 but appeared on the market only in 1947 according to Ġużè Gatt, and is considered as Taylor's best literary work. His source text was supposed to be the Vulgate the text of which he reproduces alongside his Maltese translation. Rev Prof Peter Paul Saydon sustained, though, that Taylor translated from Hebrew.[6]

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3. The first edition was published with the concurrence of the Media Centre. The relationships of the two institutions in this business were not always smooth.
4. See minutes of its first meeting.
5. For some information of this figure one may read Ġużè Gatt's review in *It-Torċa*, Sunday 11th October 1970 and other isssues of this Sunday paper.
6. "The Earliest Biblical Translation from Hebrew into Maltese" in *Journal of the Malta University Society* 2/10-12(1937)1-12 reproduced as Appendix 2 in Carmel Sant, *Bible Translation and Language*, Melita Theologica Supplementary Series,2; Malta 1992,285-297. Saydon sustains that Taylor worked his translation from Hebrew and that his first translation of the psalms was incorporated into the translation of *The Book of Common Prayer* published in 1845; he then prepared his translation for Catholic readership by adapting his text to the Vulgate edition, which edition was incorporated with his Maltese translation of the Office for Holy Week that was first published in

The second important translation of the psalter was carried out by Mgr Prof Peter Paul Saydon. Some information about his translation of the psalter, it was published in 1950 in two pamphlets; of course this translation appears from the start as part of a wider translation project; actually the two volumes form Ktieb 17 of the project entitled 'Il-Kotba Mqaddsa bil-Malti'[7]. In the first part we find psalms 1-72 while in the second part the remaining psalms. As with modern translations we find with each psalm a 'pastoral title' in bold; the traditional titles which we inherited from the Jewish tradition, printed in italics, the text, a substantial introduction to the psalter as we find with each biblical book, and copious notes beneath the text. Saydon used the Hebrew text for his source text as the reader is told in the very cover of the first edition: 'Ktieb is-Salmi maqlub mill-Lhudi u mfisser minn Dun P.P. Saydon.'

Donatus Spiteri OFM Capp. was responsible for the first draft of the translation of the psalter published by the Malta Bible Society in 1984 under the general editorship of Prof Carmel Sant.[8] This first draft and subsequent developments were published on their own in book form in 1983 before they were published as part of *Il-Bibbja*. By then parts of several psalms had been in use in the liturgy of the Catholic Church for some years. This served both to expose these psalms to the public but also to adapt to public reading and to test them for their understandability by a listening public. Besides the several services already offered by the Saydon translation, Spiteri introduced the rabbinic division of the psalter into five books. This division can be seen also in *Il-Bibbja*.

The translation and publication of the psalter by Donatus Spiteri was followed by that of Carmel Zammit in *Il-Bibbja Mqaddsa*[9]. Zammit employed as his source text the Authorised Version and not the Hebrew text. And that of Father

1848. What remains to be explained is the relationship between these editions of Taylor's translation of the psalter and his publication with the title *Ctieb is-Salmi tas-Sultan David u Il-Cantici* that carries the date of 1846. In a later work, a pamphlet entitled *History of the Maltese Bible*, (Malta 1957), which the present writer annexed within the monograph of Carmel Sant, *Bible Translation and Language*, Malta 1992, 268-284, Professor Saydon describes Taylor's translation as "a poetical paraphrase of the Psalms...based on the Latin Vulgate, which is printed side by side with it, with occasional agreements with the translation of the *Book of Common Prayers*," (Sant 1992,280).

7. P.P. Saydon, *Ktieb is-Salmi*, L-Ewwel Taqsima, The Empire Press, Malta 1950; *Ktieb is-Salmi*, It-Tieni Taqsima, The Empire Press, Malta 1950.

8. Cfr. the Presentation to the First edition of *Il-Bibbja.Il-Kotba Mqaddsa*, Malta Bible Society, Malta 1984, p.xi.

9. Trinitarian Bible Society, London 1980(?),396-450.

Guido Schembri OFM who published his edition of the psalter in Maltese 'pro manuscripto' in 2006. The question which we shall attempt to answer in detail in the coming paragraphs concerns both how each individual translator rendered the text he found in the original Hebrew or in the source text he used as well as how does each relate to the translations that came chronologically before him within this tradition. Zammit confesses that the Maltese translations that preceded his were read and closely studied[10].

1.3 *General Description of Psalm 1,1-2*

In reviewing the handling of the biblical text by the various Maltese translators, we always start with the Hebrew text, even when the translators may have used the mediacy of translations in other languages in their translation work. Our analysis will always start with a global analysis of the Hebrew text on the linguistic and literary level.

1.3.1. *Global view of Psalm 1: linguistic and literary levels*

As one reads through this short psalm, one cannot fail to notice as literary features the use of contrast, imaginary[11], and explicit intensification. One should note also the use of characterization. The poem is dominated by two figures: the 'wicked' and 'the good' although one should note that no blanket word stands for the positive character who dominates the first half of the psalm, while for the wicked the poet employs two words that in verse 5 stand parallel: the רשעים, 'the wicked' and חטאים 'sinners'(RSV). In recompense, 'the good' occupies the greater part of the psalm (the first strove), while to the wicked is given strove 2 which is shorter (vv.4-5).[12] This seems to lead to the conclusion that the literary imbalance which characterises the poem as a whole was a strategic option by the writer and has to be explained by the general hermeneutics of the psalm.

10. "Filwaqt li dawn it-traduzzjonijiet Maltin kollha kienu moqrijin u studjati b'attenzjoni kbira, din it-traduzzjoni kienet maghmula mill-Versjoni Awtorizzata Ingliża, b'referenza ta' spiss littest Grieg, lill-Versjoni Franċiża ta' Louis Segond, u lill-verżjoni Taljana ta' Dottore Giovanni Luzzi," in the forward entitled 'Kelmtejn Qabel'(page unnumbered).
11. For a detailed discussion of the imagery in Psalm one could refer to Gianfranco Ravasi, *Il Libro dei Salmi, Commento e Attualizzazione*, vol 1, EDB, Bologna 1985, 74-79.
12. Verse 6 is the conclusion of the entire psalm, with a colon each being given to the two categories.

1.3.1.1 Psalm 1,1

Technically speaking, we have in this verse, two bicola; actually we have one clause, made up of two words, the subject הָאִישׁ and the predicate אַשְׁרֵי. The rest of the bicola consists of three relative clauses that qualify the subject and thus explain why 'this man' is to be considered as happy. The three relative clauses employ the same relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר, thus creating the impression that only one statement is being made with the three statements being fused into one. The three אֲשֶׁר statements are closely linked not merely by the employment of one relative pronoun for the three[13], but also by a literary structure of progressive intensification. "A progression seems to be intended: first an occasional compliance, then a lingering, and finally a settled identification. By the 'wicked', 'sinners' and 'scoffers' is meant those hardened in defiance of God and of all that is good; arrogant and unscrupulous, they would be god to themselves, attempting to procure their own gain, and callous towards the poor."[14] The presence of intensification as a literary tool means that the three categories 'wicked' 'sinners' and 'scoffers' are not necessarily meant to refer to three different groups of persons. The poet gives to the clause an exclamatory character by putting the predicate ahead of the subject and at the head of the clause. The use of אַשְׁרֵי is really marked and should be rendered by a word or phrase that carries stress and markedness. Eaton suggests the translation: 'O the sheer happiness of the person who.....!'(Ibid.).

The morphology and etymology of the initial exclamatory word has been defined differently by different authors.[15] We shall take the lexeme here as the plural construct of the noun אֶשֶׁר[16], with the plural form being part of its intensive use. The clause built here with the subject and a predicate that in itself is in construct state resulted into a very complicated syntactical complex, because the construct state links the *nomen rectum* to the *nomen regens* in the genitive construction, bringing changes on its stress system.[17] Perhaps these changes in the internal stress system proved useful to the rhythmic system of the verse chosen by the poet, and was

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13. Cfr. Luis Alonso Schökel, *I Salmi*, Borla, Rome1992, I, 139.
14. John Eaton, *The Psalms*, Continuum, London2005, 62. On progression as a rhetorical tool cfr. Yairah Amit, "Progression as a Rhetorical Device in Biblical Literature" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*,28/1(2003)3-32.
15. Alonso Schökel, *Salmi*, I, 139.
16. Paul Joüon & T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, Subsidia Biblica 27; Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome 2007, § 89l read the lexeme as nominative of the rare feminine form אַשְׁרֵי which they find in Gen 30,13.
17. Cfr. Ibid., §§ 92a-b

the reason for the choice of the current syntax. At the same time, this syntactical structure strengthened the grammatical and semantic links between the subject הָאִישׁ and the predicate אַשְׁרֵי.

1.3.1.1.1 *Psalm 1,1 in Maltese translations*

a) In this and the following paragraph we shall offer a comparative study of the way Maltese translators of the psalter dealt with the various aspects of the text in its original Hebrew text. Of course we have to keep in mind that at least two of the translators, Taylor and Zammit worked from other translations as their source text, Taylor from the Vulgate and the Italian Bible of Bishop Martini[18], Zammit translated the Authorised Version. This means that these sourse texts will have to be taken into consideration as we evaluate the contributions of these translators.

How have these members of the Maltese Translation Tradition handled Ps 1,1? Generally speaking, we may say that while all kept the poetic format of the Hebrew original, the poetic structure of the psalm was taken care of mainly by Saydon and Spiteri. The others rendered the text as a meditation, which the psalm is after all.[19] Concerning the translation of 1,1, Saydon may be said to have established the vocabulary, especially the terminology for the three categories of person with whom הָאִישׁ as blessed is said to stand in contrast. In the first bicolon we meet with the word רְשָׁעִים, strictly speaking an adjective often used as a substantive in Biblical Hebrew as here.[20] The word denotes a person guilty of crime, deserving punishment (Ex 2,13;23,1); we find it also with the meaning of one who is guilty of hostility to God or to his people (Ps 17,13; Is 26,10); of one who was guilty of sin against God or man (Mal 3,18). In Num 16,26 we meet the phrase הָאֲנָשִׁים הָרְשָׁעִים ('the wicked men'). The term tends therefore to carry a theological connotation. Saydon renders the term *il-ħżiena*, 'the wicked', a nominal derived from the verb of the II form *ħażżen*[21], 'to make bad' which has both a physical meaning, to spoil, (*il-melħ*

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18. Cfr. Carmel Sant, "The Translation of the Bible and the Maltese Language:1810-1850" in Sant 1992,12-13.18-19 for the use of this translation of the Bible during the nineteenth and twentieth century Malta.

19. Cfr. Alonso Schökel, *Salmi*, 140-141.

20. BDB, 957.

21. Or perhaps our lexeme is more directly related the IX form of the root, *ħżien*, which Aquilina defines as a) to grow bad(physically); b) to grow bad morally; c) to be or become worse, dete-riorate; d) to become gangrenous; e) to become shrewd, cunning crafty. Perhaps the nuances in b) and e) are relevant to our case. There is also the word *ħażen*, 'evil, wickedness'*għawn wisq*

żejjed iħażżen l-ikel, 'too much salt spoils the food') but also a metaphorical moral meaning: 'to make bad morally, corrupt, deprave' (*bl-inġiba tagħhom ħażżnuhom erbat itfal* 'their bad behaviour has had a deleterious effect on the four children'.[22] Saydon therefore chose the metaphorical rendering of the substantive הרשעים; and he was followed by Spiteri, Zammit, and Scembri. One should note also that while Hebrew does not understand the wick as a class, even if the substantive is plural, in Maltese the word is always rendered as a category: *il-ħżiena*, the wicked. In Maltese what is compared is not the life style of an individual good person with a wicked person, but two social life styles, lived by different categories of persons.

In Hebrew the blessed man is defined as him who does not walk בעצת רשעים. The nominal עצת is the construct form of the noun עצה I, meaning 'counsel' from the root יעץ 'to counsel'. The nominal in our text is governed by the preposition ב which may be described, together with the *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*[23], as 'ב of accompaniment' with the meaning 'in accordance with'. The poet is saying 'in accordance with the counsel of the wicked'. This phrase is adverbial and qualifies the verb הָלַךְ, a qatal form of the verb denoting aspect rather than tense. The poet is not asserting that happiness belongs to the man who in the past *has not walked* in the counsel of the wicked, but that happiness belongs to the man who does not at all walk in the counsel of the wicked; walking in the counsel of the wicked is not perceived to be a past action but a present as well as past, a complete event. This is a case of what Mitchell Dahood describes as a verb sequence of yqtl (the non-verbal clause which is found in the opening colon — qtl (the verb הָלַךְ in this second colon), a sequence referring to the present.[24] The issue is not whether the action is past or present (tense), but whether it is complete or not-complete (= aspect). Blessedness belongs to him who has no dealings with the wicked. One may translate the metaphor or keep it. The present writer would prefer if the metaphor of walking is kept as the Maltese translators have generally done as that of the two ways is a universal metaphor.[25]

ħażen fid-dinja, ' there is much evil in the world']; but also schrewdness, craftiness [*għall-ħażen ta' moħħu ma jgħaddih ħadd*, ' nobody is as schrewd as he is']. Cfr. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, Midsea Books, Malta 1987,527-528.

22.   Ibid., 527.
23.   Volume VI, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield 2007, 530.
24.   Cfr. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III*, Anchor Bible 17a; Doubleday, Garden City, New York1970, 420-423
25.   Cfr. Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, SCM Press, London1962, 103-104.

Hieni l-bniedem li ma jimxix ma' fehmiet il-ħżiena (Saydon)

Hieni l-bniedem li ma jimxix fuq il-pariri tal-ħżiena (Spiteri)

Hieni l-bniedem li ma jimxix fuq il-parir tal-ħżiena (Zammit)

Imbierek il-bniedem li fuq il-pariri tal-ħżiena ma jimxix (Schembri)

A few comments: a) It is evident that Saydon and Spiteri set the agenda for the vocabulary. The main lexemes and the main syntactical structures are rendered in the same way in the subsequent translations. Spiteri changed the translation of בעצת from *ma' fehmiet* which is still good currency in modern Maltese to *fuq il-pariri* which is rather more commonly used today for 'counsel' or 'counselling'. The blessed man would not allow the wicked to counsel him. Schembri went this way by anteposing the phrase *fuq il-pariri tal-ħżiena* from after the verb which the phrase is qualifying to just after the relative pronoun, granting the phrase greater emphasis, but impeding the smooth flow of thought. Schembri differs from the others also in translating the opening interjection אשרי האיש by *Imbierek il-bniedem*. This strategy has the advantage of using an adjective which is more commonly used in modern Maltese than *hieni*; at the same time the translator in this way went out of the translation tradition in Maltese which normally rendered the macarisms of Matthew 5 by the adjective *hieni* 'happy, contented, satisfied'[26] a lexeme that derives from the root HNJ, mostly known from the verb *henna*, 'make one happy', [*Alla jhennik*, 'May God make you happy!']. For the adjective *hieni*, Prof Aquilina gives as samples from oral tradition: *Mindu marad missieru m'għadux hieni bħalma kien*; since his father fell ill, he is no longer as happy as he was; *Kemm ħassejtni hieni meta smajt li għaddejt mill-eżami*: I felt so happy when I heard that I passed the examination. Yet Prof. Aquilina's entry on this lexeme is not free of ambiguity as he seems to suggest that this word is rather obsolete, while these phrases from orality prove to the contrary. One has to add that Prof Schembri renders the macarisms in Matthew 5 through the adjective 'imbierek'[27] 'blessed' though *hieni* and *mbierek* (the passive participle of the verb *bierek,* 'to bless') are not experienced as synonyms in Maltese. The present writer thinks that Schembri's translation reflects the influence of English on his own studies and on Maltese in general. Very often, the adjective μακάριοι in Matthew 5,3-11 is rendered in English translations by 'blessed': 'Blessed are

26. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*,I, 457-458.
27. Cfr. Guido Scembri, *L-Evanġelju ta' Sidna Ġesù Kristu*, pro manuscriptu, Malta 2001.

the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (NRSV, which then renders אַשְׁרֵי in Ps 1,1 by 'happy'). All in all, *hieni* is preferable even though in modern Maltese it tends to be used mainly in religious contexts.

b) וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד

The second relative clause stands in a chiastic relationship to the previous colon in the sense that the central elements in each are the adverbial phrases that qualify the verb in each colon:

לֹא הָלַךְ בַּעֲצַת רְשָׁעִים
וּבְדֶרֶךְ חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמָד

The remaining elements in the two cola are the negative *qatal* verbs. The subject in both cola is the relative pronoun אֲשֶׁר in the first colon of the verse, which is isolated from the subsequent contents through the *paseq* sign[28] thus taken by rabbinic exegesis as servicing the three subsequent relative clauses qualifying the subject הָאִישׁ. The chiasmus implies that as עֵצַת, 'counsel', is abstract, its parallel in the following colon, דֶּרֶךְ, 'way' is also abstract or metaphorical. This colon has its own verb, עָמָד, with the basic meaning of 'to stand' here carrying the nuance of 'to tarry, remain,' together with the preposition בְּ that governs the nominal דֶּרֶךְ, 'way'. The semantic subject of the term 'way' is חַטָּאִים, a nominal that carries the meaning of 'sinful'[29], 'sinners' in the theological sense. In Gen 13,13 its theological sense becomes quite clear as it is parallel to רָעִים, 'bad, evil' and governs the nominal יְהוָה through the preposition לְ. In the third colon of Psalm 1,1 'the man' mentioned in the first colon is said to be happy because he does not remain in the way of sinners; he is not sinful.

28.   Cfr. Joüon & Muraoka, *Grammar of Biblical Hebrew*, §15m
29.   The three terms רְשָׁעִים, חַטָּאִים, and לֵצִים, although they have different basic meanings, may be said to be synonyms in Prof David Crystal's definition givden in his dictionary: "For two terms to be synonyms, it does not mean that they be identical in meaning i.e. interchangeable in all contexts and with identical connotations—this unlikely possibility is sometimes referred to as total synonymity. Synonyms can be said to occur if items are close enough in their meaning to allow a choice to be made between them in some contexts without there being any difference for the meaning of the sentence as a whole," *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, Blackwell, Oxford 2003, 450. This occurs in the use of these three terms in Psalm 1. This citation is found in Paul Ellingworth, "Translating Synonyms" *The Bible Translator*, 59/1(January 2008)18.

How did Maltese translators rendered this colon? The first translator of the Psalter, Richard Taylor, interprets the דרך metaphor (Vulgate 'via') as meaning walking in the teaching(he abandons the threefold structure of the Hebrew text which all the other translators maintained; the preposition *mahhom* must be referring to *midinbin* in the previous line). Taylor renders the Vulgate's 'in via peccatorum non stetit' as *la mahhom jimxi jghallem* [and with them he does not walk teaching,,,]. The object of this teaching is given in the last line of the strove: *taghlimiet l-izjed chefrin* [the most absurd teachings]. Taylor's rendering lost for the reader of the psalm the nuance of permanence contained in the Hebrew verb עמד which the Vulgate rendered through the verb 'stetit'. It would appear that Taylor failed to understand at least this first strove of the psalm. One understands why his successor, Prof. Peter Paul Saydon completely departs away from Taylor's translation. Saydon not only maintains the cola system of the Hebrew text in the disposition of the text of his translation, which system Taylor fails to keep at least in this first strophe; he also translates with the Hebrew text as his source text, keeping some of the poetic structure of the original: *u le ma jieqaf fi triq il-hatjin* [and he does not stop on the way of the guilty].

Donatus Spiteri worked with the Hebrew text just like Saydon; he also maintained its threefold structure and the cola system. One main difference in his translation strategy from that of Saydon was to repeat the relative pronoun as the head of each relative clause:

Saydon: *Hieni l-bniedem li*
          ma jimxix ma fehmiet il-hziena,
          u le ma jieqaf fi triq il-hatjin,
          u le ma joqghod fil-laqghat tal-keshin.
Spiteri: *Hieni l-bniedem*
          li ma jimxix fuq il-pariri tal-hziena,
          li ma jiqafx fi triq il-hatjin,
          li ma joqghodx fil-laqghat taz-zeblieha;

A few comments are in order: 1) Spiteri adopted a different structure of the negative syntax than Saydon. His structure was in part dictated by the decision to make explicit the presence of the relative pronoun *li* even lexically, as the subject of the individual relative clause in each colon. Saydon adopted the strategy of his Hebrew original and left the relative pronoun in the first colon to serve the subsequent clauses as well notwithstanding the ever growing distance between the subject

and the predicate in each clause; Spiteri looked at the structure of the sentence in spoken Maltese which was probably perceived as requiring the use of the relative pronoun.[30] Probably, Saydon's strategy is more adapt for a poetic structure, while Spiteri's for non poetic structures. However, the repetition of the relative pronoun in Spiteri's rendering served the poetic needs of the stanza and made cohesion within the stanza more clearly felt. In other words, the two translators served the Psalm's *poesis*, differently though.

2) Spiteri adopted Saydon's choice of vocabulary with few exceptions. In the second colon Spiteri preferred the more modern *fuq il-pariri* to the more semitic term *fehmet* which the construct state of the noun *fehma* for rendering the Hebrew noun עֵצָה that is governed by the preposition בְּ. This noun is said to derive from the root עָצָה I with the basic meaning of 'to shut'.[31] Mitchell Dahood translated the word in Ps 1,1 as 'council'[32]: 'How blest the man who has not entered the council of the wicked'. But the meaning 'counsel' has not been excluded from this root,[33] so that Saydon's *fehma* or Spiteri's *pariri* which have been described as synanimous[34] remain possible. But of course, if the two meanings 'counsel' and 'council' somehow lived together in the Hebrew root, Spiteri's rendering definitely narrows down the semantic range of the word in Hebrew as *parir* favours 'counsel' but does not include 'council'; but nor does Saydon's *fehma* include Dahood's rendering of עֵצָה in this Psalm as 'council'.[35] Spiteri may be said to have improved Saydon's translation in choosing a word that is more commonly used in the semantic field of personal counselling; but he does not differ in exegesis from the great *maestro* of Bible Translation in Maltese.

3) Another significant difference in Spiteri from Saydon concerns the rendering of the Hebrew nominal לֵצִים, participle of the Qal form of the verb לִיץ,'to scorn'.[36] If this nominal here is seen as a synonym of the parallel terms in the other cola, רְשָׁעִים and חַטָּאִים, the לֵצִים are not being seen as a particular social group but as people with a particular behaviour. Saydon rendered this word through a strong word, *keshin*, which beside the literal meaning of 'cold' has a metaphorical meaning

30. Cfr.A. Cremona, *Taghlim fuq il-Kitba Maltija*, Lux Press, Malta 1962, 258-259.
31. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, VI, Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield 2007, 902
32. *Psalms 1-50*, Anchor Bible 16; Doubleday, New York 1966, 1-2.
33. John Worrell, "עֵצָה: 'Counsel' or 'Council' at Qumran?" *Vetus Testamentum*, 20(1970)65-74.
34. Cfr. Albert W. Agius, *It Te\awru. {abra ta' Sinonimi u Tifsiriet Jixxiebhu Maltin*, Malta2000,58.
35. Cfr. Joseph Aquilina, *Maltese –English Dictionary*, I, Midsea Books, Malta 1987, 315.
36. Cfr BDB, 539.

of 'full of affectation, one who tries to be smart [*mara kiesħa ddejjaq lil kulħadd* 'a woman full of affectations gets on everybody's nerves']; impudent'[*kiesaħ fi kliemu u f'għemilu*'he is impudent in the way he speaks and behaves'].[37] I wonder whether these were the nuances the psalmist wanted to underline when he chose the term לֵצִים which constitutes also the climax of the thought process that starts in the second colon. Instead of *keshin* Spiteri employs the term *żeblieħa* from *żeblaħ*, to humiliate, vilify; the nominal *żeblieħ*, 'a contemptuous, vilifying, vituperous person'.[38] Spiteri's is another literal translation of the Hebrew, but it is probably better, which however requires that it be read in the context of the whole psalm, especially as in contrast to the following verse which speaks about 'the blessed man''s relationship to the Law. The man who carries the initial blessing is not to be found among people who vilify the Law, or who show no respect towards it, or who fail to take it as their דֶּרֶךְ, way, their way of life.[39] In this context Spiteri's *żeblieħa* as a general term fits better than Saydon's *keshin* which also tends to add a line of contempt towards these people identified as לֵצִים implied in colloquial, spoken Maltese.

How has the post-Spiteri tradition rendered the third colon of the first strophe of this psalm? How does this tradition relate to the translation by Spiteri and Saydon? We shall start by giving the text:

> Zammit: ....*lanqas jieqaf fi triq il-midinbin*
> Schembri:...... *li ma jieqafx fit-triq tal-midinbin*

Comments: 1) As remarked above, Zammit's rendering reflects not so much the Hebrew text but the translator's source text which was the Authorised Version; this rendered this colon thus: 'nor standeth in the way of sinners'. Zammit's is a formal translation of this English text. Unfortunately, this strategy of Zammit led him to mishandle somewhat the negative formulation of the sentence. The adverbial *lanqas* is made up of the comparative of the nominal *nieqes*, 'wanting, lacking' [*użin nieqes* 'short weight'][40] and the article *l-* and is employed in negative sentences. Since basically it carries the nuance of the comparative and, with the article, the superlative, the adverb tends to be used in a negative sentence after another negative sentence, carrying the nuance of 'nor'. The clause with *lanqas* tends to be the

37. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, 644-645.
38. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, 1604.
39. Cfr. Gianfranco Ravasi, *I Salmi*, I, 80 for the exegesis of this word.
40. Aquilina, *Maltese –English Dictionary*,II, 889

climax of a series of negative sentences. Zammit, perhaps under the influence of the particle 'nor' in English mishandled the grammar here by anteponing before the verb in the last two verbs of the triad in the strove two instances of *lanqas*, while Spiteri made the contrary mistake of using the simple *ma* even in the third colon instead of *lanqas* thus treating the three cola as equal and obliterating in this way the climatic role of the third colon:

Spiteri: *li ma jimxix fuq il-pariri tal-ħżiena*
           li ma jiqafx fi triq il-ħatjin,
           li ma joqgħodx fil-laqgħat taż-żeblieħa.

Zammit: *li ma jimxix fuq il-parir tal-ħżiena*
          lanqas jieqaf fi triq il-midinbin,
          u lanqas joqgħod fejn joqgħodu ż-żeblieħa

Zammit puts on the same level the second and third colon. Probably, his two cola are not ungrammatical and they are understandable, but the use of *lanqas* in the second colon weakens the style of the strophe as a whole. Otherwise, the influence of Spiteri is clearly felt in the use of the nominal *il-parir* ['the counsel' even if in the singular, in contrast to the plural of Spiteri's] and the translation of לֵצִים by *żeblieħa*[which the Authorised Version rendered by 'scornful'; Zammit's is a literal rendering of this English word not of the Hebrew לֵצִים]. Following his English source text, Zammit rendered the Hebrew head word הַטֹּאִים of the second colon by the theological term *midinbin* rather than by the more general lexeme *ħatjin*, 'the guilty ones' of Saydon and Spiteri.

1.3.1.1.2 *Psalm 1,2*

a) *The Hebrew Text* This is rather a short verse, made up of a bicolon, that is, one line in the Hebrew Bible, two short lines in modern translations. The main features of this bicolon are: 1) The adversative composite adverb כִּי אִם which in Hebrew may have two main functions. On the one hand, it carries the exceptive meaning especially after a negative or an oath. The BDB cites Gen 32,27 where we read "I will not let you go *unless you bless me*." The condition limits the wide range of the main clause. The other use is when the כִּי אִם clause contradicts the main clause; in this case the adverb has to be translated by 'but, rather'. In Gen 15,4 the Lord discusses with Abraham who was going to be his heir. Abraham lamented with the

Lord that as He had not given him a natural son, one of his servants was going to inherit him. The Lord answers him:

<div dir="rtl" align="center">

לֹא יִירָשְׁךָ זֶה

כִּי אִם אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא מִמֵּעֶיךָ

(v.4)   הוּא יִירָשֶׁךָ

</div>

A literal translation: "It will not be this one who will inherit you; but he who will come out from you, he will inherit you". While Abraham indicated one of his servants as the possible heir since the Lord had not provided him with a natural son, the Lord insists that the one who was to inherit Abraham was to be one who will come out him, that is, will be a natural son.[41] The use of כִּי אִם in Ps 1,2 is of this second kind. The psalmist is contrasting what he says in v.2 to what he has said in v.1 especially in the three אֲשֶׁר clauses. This means that the adverb has to be translated by 'rather, but' or something of the sort.

2) The two instances of the phrase בְּתוֹרָה, literally 'in the l/Law'. In each of the two cola we find this phrase which is always qualified. In the first colon the noun תּוֹרָה is in the construct state with יְהוָה being the *nomen rectum*[42], 'the l/Law of the Lord', while in the second colon the nominal תּוֹרָה is qualified by the pronominal suffix of the third person singular masculine, 'his l/Law' with the suffix presumably referring to יְהוָה given the parallelism of the two cola, although, as shall see, we have here a case of 'stairstep parallelism.'[43]

The first colon is made up of the adversative composite adverb כִּי אִם, which serves the entire bicolon though; the remaining constituents are a noun clause with the subject being the noun חֶפְצוֹ, delight, that is qualified by the pronominal suffix of the third person singular masculine, his delight; the predicate is an adverbial phrase introduced by the governing preposition בְּ; the phrase is placed in an emphatic position with the nominal clause by being fronted to after the adverbial כִּי אִם. This means that while the headword of the clause is the subject חֶפְצוֹ, the noun phrase בְּתוֹרַת יְהוָה carries enormous weight. There are a few questions that still need to be answered: what is the meaning of תּוֹרָה in this text? What is the

41. Cfr. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12-36. A Commentary*, SPCK, London1985,220-221.
42. On the construct state in Hebrew one may consult A.E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, Clarendon Press, Oxford1910,§128a
43. Cfr. Lynell Zogbo & Ernst R.Wendland, *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible. A Guide for Understanding and for Translating*, United Bible Societies, New York2000,82-83.

force of the preposition בְּ? What is the poet saying in this colon about this man that has been termed 'happy'?

The nomen regens in the genitival phrase תורת יהוה governed by the preposition בְּ derives from the root ירה which in verbal form basically means 'to throw, shoot'.[44] From this basic meaning there developed a metaphorical meaning 'to teach' especially in its causative (hiphil) form (cfr. 1Sam 12,23; Pss 25,8;32,8). The nominal תורה derives from this form of the verb with the meaning of 'direction, instruction, law'. Alonso Schökel summarises the semantic range of this lexeme in this way: "La parola *Tôra* significa originariamente una istruzione, una direttiva; successivamente passa a designare la volontà di Dio, articolata in parola e comunicata all'uomo; può trasformarsi in una entità autonoma, oggettivata; giunge poi a designare un *corpus* cristallizzato e trasmesso con autorità. All'epoca in cui collochiamo cronologicamente il salmo, il carattere di corpo canonico è un dato normalmente presente..."[45]In the case of the canonical meaning, the first consonant of the lexeme is capitalised.

The preposition בְּ is semantically complex. One has to keep in mind that this preposition in this context is itself governed by the noun חפצו; the noun חֵפֶץ derives from the verb with its root having the same radicals and means 'to delight', as a noun therefore it means 'delight, pleasure'.[46] The preposition בְּ explains the origin, the cause of delight of the אִישׁ of verse 1 who is the ultimate subject of the nominal clause also in verse 2a and who is here referred to by the pronominal suffix attached to the noun חפץ. 'His pleasure (comes) from the Law of יהוה'. As a nominal clause the copula or its equivalent has to be furnished by the reader. 'Rather, (it is) in the Law of Yahweh his pleasure.' Within the contrasting structure that the poet builds in verses 1-2, the 'Law of Yahweh' balances the three phrases מושב ליצם דרך חטאים, עצת רשעים all of which phrases are also governed by the preposition בְּ probably with a local meaning. This אִישׁ takes his direction from the word of God now become a book and not from the teachings of the three categories of persons mentioned in verse 1. This explains his deep happiness.

With the statement of verse 2a, the poet has not expressed all his thought. In verse 2 we have another colon in verse 2b: ובתורתו יהגה יומם ולילה. The colon consists

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44. BDB, 434-435.
45. *I Salmi*, 145.
46. BDB, 342-343.

of two adverbial phases each at each end of the colon, and a *yiqtol* verb with the subject that remains unlexicalised and encoded within the morphology of the verb. This is a verbal clause. One should note immediately that the two adverbial phrases play a different role within the clause. The closing phrase יומם ולילה is clearly qualifying the verb יהגה while the phrase ובתורתו which is a perfect parallel to בתורת יהוה of the first colon with the pronominal suffix referring back to Yahweh. This phrase in the second colon has a resumptive function, an underlining role of the concept בתורה, 'in the Law'. The repetition here at the head of the clause confirms this role.[47] While the phrase יומם ולילה, as we have seen, qualifies the verb of the clause, the clause initial בתורתו seems to be qualifying the clause as a whole, besides confirming what the poet asserts in the first colon of the verse. We have here a case of what Zogbo and Wendland call 'stairstep parallelism' "where one element from the first line is repeated in the second, which serves to focus on some significant added information."[48]

The added information, of course, concerns the verb יהגה with the adverbial phrase 'day and night' that qualifies it. The verb הגה I carries various meanings: 'moan, growl, utter, speak, muse'.[49] The particular nuance depends upon the context and upon the subject of the verb. It may appear in at least two syntactical constructions: it may take the accusative of the object and carry the nuance of 'to utter', or it may govern the object through the preposition בְּ with the basic meaning of 'to muse, soliloquize, meditate'.[50] BDB considers this meaning as the one in our text together with a number of others (Jos 1,8; Pss 63,7; 77,13; 143,5). *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*[51], on the other hand, translates this בְּ as 'from' denoting the origin of a sentiment, here, joy or delight. The idea in the text seems to be that the subject has as his centre of affection the Law; he muses upon it day and night. The local sense of the preposition as 'in', would not be out of order, though it should not be perceived as being of a physical nature. If in first colon we are told that the man's 'pleasure' was in the Law of Yahweh, in this second colon we read that he muses upon it all his time (יומם ולילה), an idiomatic fixed phrase to mean

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47. On the role of repetition as a technique for emphasising items within a poem cfr.Wilfred G.E. Watson, *Classical Hebrew Poetry*, A Guide to its Technique, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 2001,278-279.
48. *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible*, 82
49. BDB, 211.
50. Ibid.
51. Vol II, 86.

'continually').[52] The man's love for the Law is more marked in the second colon, so that this colon constitutes a development over the first colon.

b) How was this bicolon translated in Maltese? We start with the earlier translations. **Richard Taylor**'s rendering is in poetic format, contrary to his source text in the Vulgate:

> *Il-bnedmin li jgħeixu sewwa*
> *Kalbhom theggeg daks in-nar:*
> *Għala id-din min tal-cbir Alla*
> *Fuqu jahsbu leil u nhar*

Vulgate   *Sed in lege Domini voluntas ejus*
          & in lege ejus meditabitur die ac nocte.

A few comments. 1) While in Hebrew and Latin which is its literal translation passing through the Septuagint, we have two equal clauses, even if only one clause is verbal (colon two), in Taylor we also find two clauses which are given unequal space: the first clause occupies the first three lines; the fourth line constitutes a separate clause that shares the same subject: *il-bnedmin li jgħeixu sewwa* with the first clause. 2) Taylor opts to make explicit the subject of the two cola which the Hebrew leaves unlexicalised though the contrasting structure makes the explicitation of the subject unnecessary as the reader gleans immediately that the poet is speaking of הָאִישׁ of the first colon who is then the subject of the three אֲשֶׁר clauses in verse 1. The subject in the second colon of verse 2 is encoded in the morphology of the verb יֶהְגֶּה though again it remains without being lexicalised. In Taylor the subject is the first concept to be lexicalised and given prominent place by being allotted the entire first line of his text. It actually consists of a noun defined by the article and a relative clause that define the subject better. One should note also that while in the Hebrew text as well as in its Vulgate translation, the subject of verse 2 is the same as the subject of verse 1, in Taylor this is not evident. It is lexicalised as *il-bnedmin li jgħeixu sewwa* ['the people who live a godly life'] and the plural morphology is kept through out the strophe, in both subject and predicates. 3) There is in Taylor a clear deficiency in punctuation so that it is not easy, for instance, to decipher the relationship between the clause that starts with *il-bnedmin...* and the clause that starts with *Fuqu....*The pronominal suffix attached to the preposition *fuq*, 'on' refers

52. BDB,401. subject

no doubt to *id-din* in the previous line. The role of the colon after *in-nar* is far from clear. But that is the only punctuation mark besides the final full stop at the end of the strophe. What is the role *ghala* in line three? It is actually the preposition *ghal* with an added syllable to complete the verse. As Joseph Aquilina's *Maltese-English Dictionary*[53] shows, this preposition has many different uses. Basically it means 'for'. Among other things, it can denote an inclination, an aptitude for something. *Ghandu ġibda ghall-ilsna barranin* ['He has an aptitude **for** foreign languages']. *Ghandu widna tajba ghall-mużika* ['He has a good ear **for** music']. It is in this manner that Taylor uses the preposition *ghal* in our context. The people who live well have their heart burning like fire **for** *id-din min tal cbir Alla*.

The headword of what is globally a genitival phrase is a rare word in Maltese vocabulary. The nominal *din* can mean 'natural disposition': *bniedem ta' din ħażin* ['a man of wicked disposition'].[54] But the principal meaning seems to be that of 'religion': *id-din nisrani*, 'the Christian religion'. Aquilina though cites the 1928 M.Feghali's work[55] *Contes, Légendes, Coutumes Populaires du Liban et Syrie* to show that the use of the word *dîn* in Arabic, the source for the Maltese word, was changing. In modern Maltese it is the word of Romance origin, *reliġjon*, that is normally used, and hardly at all the term *din*. Of course, we have to remember that Taylor published his book in 1846. Very probably, for Taylor, the lexeme *din* carried the meaning of 'religious law'[56] thus for him the term was apt to cover the Latin word and concept 'lex' which plays such an important literary role in his source text. The word *din* in Taylor is qualified by a circumlocutive phrase *min tal chbir Alla* ['of the mighty God']. In modern Maltese orthography this would be written differently: *minn tal-kbir Alla*. In the strophe in Taylor, the final line actually translates part of verse 2b of the Hebrew text: *Fuqu jaħsbu leil u nhar* ['on it they meditate night and day']. 4) It would appear that rather than translating Ps1, 2, Taylor has built his own text, a strophe that is based upon the Latin translation of the Hebrew text. In his text Taylor adapts the contents of his source text to formulate a new text. But definitely, it is not a translation of what the Hebrew or Vulgate Ps 1,2 says about הָאִישׁ of verse 1. It is a strophe about *Il-bnedmin li jgħeixu sewwa*, 'people who live a godly life'; only the last line may be judged as the rendering of v.2bb.

53. II, 951-953.
54. Ibid., I, 243.
55. *Contes, Légendes, Coutumes Populaires, du Liban et de Syrie*, Paris 1935,191
56. Cfr.Aquilina, Ibid., 243.

The second translator of the Psalter in Maltese could not follow Taylor's translation. And actually **Peter Paul Saydon**'s translation differs from Taylor's on a number of points.

> *Iżda fil-liġi tal-Mulej il-għaxqa tiegħu*
> *U fil-liġi tiegħu jaħseb bi nhar u bil-lejl*

This rendering is a formal equivalent[57] of the Hebrew text in that the term in Maltese for the Hebrew תורה is found in both cola, and it is governed by the same preposition, *fi*, and in that the subject remains that of the three relative clauses in verse 1. a subject which is left unlexicalised. He also disposed his text in two lines corresponding to the two cola in Hebrew. The only element which Saydon may have borrowed from Taylor is the translation of the verb יהגה in the second colon, which is rendered in the two translations by the verb *ħaseb fi* (Taylor though instead of the preposisiton *fi* employs *fuq* to bring out the meaning of 'to meditate'. Idiomatically, *ħaseb fi* carries the meaning of 'to remember affectionally'[*dejjem nahseb f'ommi*, 'I am always thinking fondly of my mother'][58] which probably fits better the context. One major departure from Taylor is the rendering of the head word in the two cola,תורה, 'law' which Taylor translated by the semitic word *iddin* but which Saydon rendered by the Romance word *liġi*. It may be that for the translation of this word Saydon let himself be influenced by the Vulgate, 'lex, legis' notwithstanding his rigorous attempt to avoid words which he would consider 'of foreign' origin, that is, of Romance, not Semitic, origin.[59] All subsequent translations followed his lead in this choice. Contrary to Taylor, Saydon was translating not using the source text to create something else. And even if Saydon could have been influenced by the Vulgate for the choice of the word *liġi* to translate תורה, though one may not exclude that the Maltese word *liġi* could have entered the vocabulary through the Italian version of the Bible of Archbishop A. Martini which was very popular among the Maltese intellectuals of the nineteenth and earlier part of the twentieth centuries,[60] he was translating the Hebrew source text not the Vulgate.

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57. For a 'formal equivalent' and 'dynamic equivalent' types of translation cfr. Stephen J. Binz, *Introduction to the Bible. A Catholic Guide for Studying Scripture*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minnesota2007, 20-22.
58. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, 512.
59. Cfr. his essay "The Maltese Translation of the Bible" originally published in *Melita Theologica* XVI(1964)1-22, then reproduced in Carmel Sant, *Bible Translation and Language*, Malta 1992, 300-322. In this edition we are referring to p. 312.
60. Cfr. Carmel Sant, *Bible Translation and Language*, 5-33.

A closer look at Saydon's rendering. 1) His first line like the Hebrew text starts
with an adversative conjunction, *iżda*, 'however, but, still, nevertheless' [*jgħid
ħafna iżda jagħmel ftit* 'he talks much, but does very little'; *ma riedx jiġi iżda
jiena xorta mort*, 'he did not want to come, still I went all the same'].[61] As we have
seen, Saydon rendered the Hebrew תורה by *liġi*, the modern Maltese word for
'law':[62] therefore the phrase תורת יהוה governed by the preposition בְּ in the first
colon of verse 2 becomes in Saydon *fil-liġi tal-Mulej* while in the second colon
the phrase with this headword becomes *fil-liġi tiegħu*, with the genitival pronoun
tiegħu referring back to *il-Mulej*, the Maltese word for 'the Lord'. In both phrases
the headword is governed by the preposition *fi* that carries a number of nuances and
is used in different contexts with slightly different nuances. Basically it means 'in,
at, inside'; included or situated within a limited space, circumstances, ratio, etc. In
the first colon this preposition is itself governed by the noun *l-għaxqa tiegħu* a noun
derived from the root GħXQ; in its verb form, *għaxxaq* of the second form, the root
means 'to delight, to make one feel very happy, very pleased [*għaxxqet lil kulħadd
bi ġmielha* 'with her good looks she delighted everyone'[63]]. The nominal *għaxqa*
derived from the first form of the verb means 'delight, pleasure' [*din il-familja
fiha għaxqa* 'it is a joy to see a family like this']; in this context Aquilina cites our
Bible at Matt 3,17 where we read *dan hu Ibni l-għażiż li fih sibt l-għaxqa tiegħi* '
this is my Son in whom I found my delight']. In colon 1 of verse 2, therefore, the
poet declares that האיש had his delight and joy 'in the law'.

What does תורה really mean in this verse? Does the poet mean divine
instruction, perhaps christallised in legal or wisdom writings? Or is he referring
to canonical scripture of some kind? We are proposing that תורה here refers to
Scripture though not to what it means in many instances of the fixed formula 'the
Law and the Prophets' (2Mac 15,9; Mt 5,17; Rom 3,21; Lk 16,16 and others)[64] that
is the Pentateuch, but is synecdochic for the entire Scripture, as it appears in for
instance 1Cor 4,21.[65] This, notwithstanding the fact that the biblical canon was still

61. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, 595.
62. Ibid., 333.
63. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*,II, 989.
64. Roger Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church*, SPCK, London 1985,
    105-109. Cfr. also Craig A. Evans, "The Scriptures of Jesus and His Earliest Followers" in Lee
    Martin McDonald & James A. Sanders(eds.), *The Canon Debate*, Hendrickson, Peabody Mas-
    sachusetts2002, 185-194.
65. On this text cfr. Anthony C/Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International
    Greek Testament Commentary, Paternoster Press, Carlisle 2000, 1120.

in its formation process.[66] Contrary to wicked men, the blessed man keeps Scripture as his directive in life, and this is his font of blessedness.

There are still two issues to discuss in some detail in Saydon's translation in its relationship to that of Taylor. One concerns the rendering of the Hebrew יהגה and the Vulgate *meditabitur* respectively by *jaħseb fi* (Saydon) and by *jaħseb fuq* (Taylor). The other touches upon the rendering by the two translators of the adverbial phrase concluding colon two יומם ולילה.

Both combinations of the verb *ħaseb* with the two prepositions are possible and well attested in spoken and written Maltese; but they are not synonymous. The combination with the preposition *fuq* employed by Taylor carry the meaning of 'to meditate, ponder upon, keep thinking about': [*għadu jaħseb fuq li ġralu*' he is still thinking about what has happened to him'; *jaħseb dejjem fuq il-mewt*, 'he is always meditating on death']. The combination with the preposition *fi* employed by Saydon carries a number of different nuances[*ħaseb ħażin fi*: 'he was suspicious of'; *jaħseb f'żaqqu*, 'he is always thinking about food'; *jaħseb dejjem fih innifsu*, 'he is self-centred'; *aħseb fl-erwieħ*, 'do not forget the souls in purgatory, pray for them'; *aħseb f'ruħek*, 'take good care of your soul' (this is an advice given to someone to bequeath some of his property to the Church for the celebration of masses for the repose of his soul after his own death].[67] Perhaps *jaħseb f'żaqqu*, *jaħseb dejjem fih innifsu* and *aħseb f'ruħek* are the close uses of the combination *ħaseb fi* which are closer to Saydon's use in this text. One may also say that the combination *ħaseb fuq* used by Taylor is more direct and less sophisticated than Saydon's *ħaseb fi*.

The concluding adverbial phrase of time in the second colon is rendered slightly differently by Taylor and Saydon. The former writes that *il-bnedmin li jgħeixu sewwa* ['the people who live correctly'] *fuqu jaħsbu leil u nhar* ['ponder upon *id-din* (perhaps, religious legislation, masculine in Maltese) night and day]. Saydon instead writes that *l-bniedem*, the subject since the first line as in Hebrew *jaħseb fil-liġi bi nhar u bil-lejl* ['thinks of the law by day time and and by night time']. Are the adverbial phrases *lejl u nhar* (modern orthography) and *bi nhar u bil-lejl* semantically equivalent? It would seem that while *lejl u nhar* is a fixed phrase to mean 'continually', *bi nhar u bil-lejl* is a constructed phrase employed in poetic

66. Cfr. Brevard S.Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, SCMPress, London1979, 69-83
67. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, 512-513.

literary contexts very similar to the Hebrew יומם ולילה. Saydon understood this phrase differently than had Taylor through the Vulgate *die ac nocte*. Essentially Taylor understood it as meaning 'continually, without respite'; Saydon took the two elements 'day' and 'night' as in opposition and contrast with each being a time quantum on its own. His rendering *bi nhar u bil-lejl* is better to translate ' by day and by night'. They function as time measurements separately while in Taylor they function in this way together. Comments: 1) The present writer thinks that יומם and לילה in Psalm1,2 stand in contrast just as they do in Jer 33,25, and they stand as time measurements separately: John Bright renders this half verse in this manner: "If my covenant with day and night does not stand".[68] 2) Saydon's translation *bi nhar u bil-lejl* maintains this syntactical function better than Taylor's does. Saydon is not saying that the good man thinks of the law all the time, but that whenever the need of the law presents itself whether it is daytime or night-time, he always takes it in due consideration. In this concern, Saydon's exegesis and translation is by far superior. 3) But Saydon together with his time has not reached the understanding of תורה as Scripture and as a synecdoche for the entire Scriptural canon. Now it is the time to reflect in translation this understanding of the word in the bicolon of verse 2.

c) Donatus Spiteri and other translators the second half of the twentieth century Donatus Spiteri followed Saydon in most of the linguistic options and in exegesis with few exceptions:

> *imma fil-liġi tal-Mulej hi l-għaxqa tiegħu*
> *lejl u nhar jaħseb fil-liġi tiegħu.*

As for vocabulary and syntax, he almost copies Saydon's; one exception is the adversative conjunction that introduces the two lines just as כי אם does in the Hebrew text. Saydon's *iżda* is replaced in Spiteri by *imma* 'but, nevertheless'[*nixtieq immur imma naħsibha* 'I wish to go but I will think it over'].[69] The lexeme *imma* can also be used as a noun with the meaning of 'snag, obstacle, unknown and unexpected obstacle' [*naħseb li hemm xi imma f'din l-affari*, 'I think there is a snag in this matter'.][70] and one may speculate that the conjunctional use is an extention

68. *Jeremiah*, Anchor Bible, 21; Doubleday, New York1965,294.
69. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I,
70. Ibid.

of the nominal use. From this short history of origins of the conjunction one may deduce that *imma* is weaker than *iżda*; one may speculate by which of the two adversative conjunctions in Maltese כי אם is rendered better. Seeing the antecedents to the statements in verse 2, the present writer thinks that a strong conjunction would fit better the context. There is another slight difference between Saydon's and Spiteri's translation of verse 2: while Saydon maintained colon 1 as a nominal clause just like the Hebrew source text, Spiteri made of the clause a verbal clause by introducing the copula *hi*:

> Saydon: *iżda fil-liġi tal-Mulej, il-għaxqa tiegħu*
> Spiteri: *imma fil-liġi tal-Mulej hi l-għaxqa tiegħu*

In both translations the subject of the clause is *il-għaxqa tiegħu*, 'his delight'; the noun *għaxqa* is feminine and this explains the choice of the third person singular feminine of the verb to be, *hi*. Both syntactical forms, with or without the copula, are possible in Maltese, though modern Maltese tends to prefer the clause with the copula. Spiteri kept the liturgical use constantly in mind and hence preferred the less literary use to more common form in oral scenarios. One last point: in both Saydon and Spiteri the predicate *fil-liġi tal-Mulej* 'in the law of the Lord' is fronted just as in the Hebrew original. But while in Hebrew this serves emphasis, in Maltese this is requested by the syntax: after the adversative conjunction we need to be told in what the delight of the man stands in order to balance the statements in verse 1, also governed by the preposition בְּ. But there is no emphasis in the Maltese statement in 2a, syntactically speaking.

Spiteri understood and translated differently the adverbial phrase יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה. We have discussed the same difference between Taylor and Saydon. Has Spiteri improved his text over Saydon's by introducing this difference? Like Taylor, Spiteri rendered this phrase as *lejl u nhar* while Saydon translated it as *bi nhar u bil-lejl*. One should note two minor issues; while in Spiteri(as in Taylor's) the two components *nhar* 'day, daylight, weekday'[71] and *lejl* 'night'[72] are undefined, in Saydon's both are defined even if formally only *lejl* takes the article. And this because as we have seen they are semantically different. Like its Hebrew antecedent the phrase *lejl u nhar* is above all an adverbial phrase of manner with the meaning 'continually' (cfr. Jos 1,8 for a similar use of the phrase[73] and a similar translation in the Maltese

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71. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, II, 906.
72. Aquilina, *Maltese-English Dictionary*, I, 739.
73. Cfr. *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, IV, 186a.

Bible)while *bi nhar u bil-lejl* is rather an adverbial phrase of time probably meaning 'whenever it is required whether by day or by night'. In Saydon the phrase *bi nhar u bil-lejl* qualifies the verb *jaħseb fi* and it comes at the end of the clause just as in Hebrew; in Spiteri, the adverbial phrase *lejl u nhar* is fronted and somehow it is thus emphasised. He also drops the conjunction which we find in Hebrew; this also helps to add emphasis. In Spiteri it is not simply the use of the 'law' by 'the man' whether at night or at day (this is Saydon)that makes him blessed, but that he uses the law continually. Of course the identification of the תורה with Scripture would have improved Spiteri's rendering well above Saydon; but with his rendering of the word by 'liġi' meaning more or less 'religious legislation' Spiteri remained within the exegetical achievement of Saydon.

The two other translations worked out during the second half of the twentieth century have not improved the text beyond Saydon or Spiteri. They employed the same vocabulary of these last two introducing slight changes here or there.

Zammit: *Iżda l-għaxqa tiegħu hi fil-liġi tal-Mulej;*
                U lejl u nhar jaħseb fil-liġi tieg]u.

Schembri: *Imma l-għaxqa tiegħu fil-liġi tal-Mulej,*
                Fiha jaħseb binhar u billejl.

.. …

Saydon: *Iżda fil-liġi tal-Mulej, il-għaxqa tiegħu*
                U fil-liġi tiegħu jaħseb bi nhar u bil-lejl

Spiteri: *imma fil-liġi tal-Mulej hi l-għaxqa tiegħu,*
                Lejl u nhar jaħseb fil-liġi tiegħu.

For the benefit of the reader we are giving again the translation of Saydon and Spiteri so as to facilitate comparison. One should keep in mind that Saydon's translation appeared in pamphlet format in 1950, Spiteri in a separate book in 1982 though his translation of the individual psalms *in parte* or *in toto* had appeared in liturgical texts some years before, while Zammit's translation appeared in the second half of the seventies or early eighties(no date is furnished), and Schembri published his text *pro manuscipto* in 2006; this chronological prospectus may illuminate the direction of possible influence of one translation upon another. In our comments at this stage

we mean simply to explain the texts of Zammit and Schembri

Comments: 1) The main differences between Saydon and Spiteri on the one hand, and Zammit and Schembri on the other, are mainly syntactical; for vocabulary and exegesis Zammit and Schembri seem to have followed Saydon or Spiteri without any problems even though Zammit was presumably translating the Authorised Version. 2) Zammit differed from Saydon in fronting the subject *l-għaxqa tiegħu*, as in good prose, while the predicate is pushed towards the end of the clause in the first colon, with the copula *hi* linking the subject to the predicate as in Spiteri. The second colon is a verbatim copy of Spiteri's translation. One detail may hint that besides Spiteri's rendering he had in front of him his source text which was the Authorised Version, and of course Saydon's. The Authorised Version of Ps 1,2 runs as follows: 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night'. There is one slight difference from Spiteri's, the initial conjunction, which is present in AV and Zammit's but not in Spiteri's. As we have seen, Spiteri may have dropped this conjunction for stylistic purposes, to put stress on the modal adverbial phrase *lejl u nhar* which thus would parallel the concept of delight in the first colon. The version with the conjuction is formally equivalent to the Hebrew text and to the AV but it is weaker in diction. 3) Schembri accepted the vobulary and exegesis of Saydon and Spiteri but went his way on a number of minor issues. a) He fronted the subject *l-għaxqa tiegħu* and placed at the end of the clause the predicate *fil-liġi tal-Mulej*. In this he follows Zammit or rather good prose standards where the subject normally comes first in the word order. b) He drops the term for 'law' in the second colon and refers to it through the pronominal suffix attached to the preposition *fi* that is governed by the verb *jaħseb*. In this he improved the style. c) At the same time he lays the stress on the concept of 'law' by fronting *fiha*. d) He returns to Saydon's rendering of the adverbial phrase ולילה יומם by translating *binhar u billejl* though he follows modern orthography which tends to link the preposition *bi* to the nominals *nhar* and *lejl* reading the two clusters as lexical unities. The blessed man meditates upon the law 'by day and by night'.

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