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The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 30 Nov 1998

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Peter T. Cash — 30 Nov 1998, 23:48

From: Nigel Price <NigelPrice1 at compuserve.com>

Wombat, a.k.a. Kevin Maroney, wrote:

John 19:30 cum ergo accepisset Iesus acetum dixit consummatum est et

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

inclinato capite tradidit spiritum

("And when Jesus had received the vinegar, he said "It is finished" and bowed his head and gave up his spirit.")

Yeah, bummer isn't it? Definitely "consummatum est" ("it is accomplished") rather than "terminus est" in the Vulgate. I still haven't found my copy

...

And, of course, I looked at John 19.30 and found "consummatum est", which just about put the tin lid on a bad day, much of the afternoon of which I

Fear not, friend Nigel--your position is salvageable. I have it on good authority that Jesus' grasp of Latin was pretty weak. In fact, he hardly used it at all, preferring the local patois (Hebrew? Aramaic? Dang, my seminary days were wasted, I fear. No, the Sergeant doth not jest--he really spent a year in seminary, during which he learned nothing.)

It's always a danger to assume that words in other languages have the same connotations and nuances that they do in English, of course.

Absolutely... Though my Latin dictionary gives "end, conclusion" as one of the possible meanings of "terminus", and that is the sense in which Cicero seems to have used it (eg "terminus contentionum" = "the end of the struggle").

Of course, we all know that the words of Jesus as recorded in the Latin Vulgate are themselves a translation--actually, a translation of a translation, since the New Testament was first recorded in Greek...which Jesus probably didn't speak either. We know also that even the best translation from one language to another risks a loss of nuance. The exact choice of words is often problematic--in many cases the translator can phrase the text in a number of different ways. Thus, I think it reasonable to posit that the Vulgate could easily have translated Christ's words as "Terminus est". Heck, it would have been a considerably more elegant translation, for my money. The fact that the Vulgate does not use this word choice does not tell decisively against your suggestion that "Terminus Est" can be translated as "It is finished", and your observation that this is the way Christ's last words are often translated into English.

No doubt about it, my theory about the significance of the name "Terminus Est" is considerably weakened by the fact that the Vulgate does not use this particular wording. I still maintain that "It is finished" is a legitimate translation of the name, though.

And I think you're right, but wrong to so quickly accept the Vulgate's word choice as relevant to your point. Perhaps Wolfe is on record somewhere as declaring the Vulgate as the One True and

Inerrant Translation; if so, we should slink back into our foxholes. But if not, I think it's reasonable to suggest that "terminus est" may be translated into English as "it is finished", and that Wolfe was aware of this. I've always been partial to that translation of the sword's name (and I've said so before).

Sgt. Rock

Michael Straight — 03 Dec 1998, 10:56 · follows Peter T. Cash

On Mon, 30 Nov 1998, Peter T. Cash wrote:

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The problem with this from a Roman Catholic sensibility is that the Church believes it has a tradition of interpreting the Bible with a better understanding of what Jesus meant than a 20th century scholar trying to figure it out by guessing what Aramaic words he might have used. The Vulgate was likely trying to capture meanings with "Consumatum Est" that "Terminus Est" did not carry.

Which is to say, I don't think the way to save this theory is to argue "The Vulgate got it wrong." Rather argue that since the English "It is finished" can mean "It is over," "It is the end," and "It is completed," "It is finished" is both a possible translation for "Terminus Est" and the common English translation of Christ's last words. So the connection is there via English (close enough that I can believe Wolfe intended it) and doesn't need to be traced back via the Vulgate.

-Rostrum