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THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE
NEW TESTAMENT



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INTRODUCTION

THIS TRANSLATION of the New Testament (to be followed in due course by the Old Testament and by the Apocrypha) was undertaken with the object of providing English readers, whether familiar with the Bible or not, with a faithful rendering of the best available Greek text into the current speech of our own time, and a rendering which should harvest the gains of recent biblical scholarship.

It is just three hundred and fifty years since King James's men put out what we have come to know as the Authorized Version. Two hundred and seventy years later the New Testament was revised. The Revised Version, which appeared in 1881, marked a new departure especially in that it abandoned the so-called Received Text, which had reigned ever since printed editions of the New Testament began, but which the advance of textual criticism had antiquated. During the eighty years which have passed since that time, textual criticism has not stood still. There is not, however, at the present time any critical text which would command the same degree of general acceptance as the Revisers' text did in its day. The present translators therefore could do no other than consider variant readings on their merits, and, having weighed the evidence for themselves, select for translation in each passage the reading which to the best of their judgement seemed most likely to represent what the author wrote. The translators are well aware that their judgement is at best provisional, but they believe the text they have followed to be an improvement on that underlying the earlier translations.

So much for the text. The next step was the effort to understand the original as accurately as possible, as a preliminary to turning it into English. During the past eighty years the study of the Greek language has no more stood still than has textual criticism. In particular, our knowledge of the kind of Greek used by most of the New Testament writers has been greatly enriched since 1881 by the discovery of many thousands of papyrus documents in popular or non-literary Greek of about the same period as the New Testament. It would be wrong to suggest that they lead to any far-reaching change in our understanding

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of the Greek of the New Testament period, but they have often made possible a better appreciation of the finer shades of idiom, which sometimes clarifies the meaning of passages in the New Testament. Its language is indeed in many respects more flexible and easy-going than the Revisers were ready to allow, and invites the translator to use a larger freedom.

Our task, however, differed in an important respect from that of the Revisers of 1881. They were instructed not only to introduce as few alterations as possible, but also 'to limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the Authorized and earlier English Versions'. Today that language is even more definitely archaic, and less generally understood, than it was eighty years ago, for the rate of change in English usage has accelerated. The present translators were subject to no such limitation. The Joint Committee which promoted and controlled the enterprise decided at the outset that what was now needed was not another revision of the Authorized Version but a genuinely new translation, in which an attempt should be made consistently to use the idiom of contemporary English to convey the meaning of the Greek. This meant a different theory and practice of translation, and one which laid a heavier burden on the translators. Fidelity in translation was not to mean keeping the general framework of the original intact while replacing Greek words by English words more or less equivalent. A word, indeed, in one language is seldom the exact equivalent of a word in a different language. Each word is the centre of a whole cluster of meanings and associations, and in different languages these clusters overlap but do not often coincide. The place of a word in the clause or sentence, or even in a larger unit of thought, will determine what aspect of its total meaning is in the foreground. The translator can hardly hope to convey in another language every shade of meaning that attaches to the word in the original, but if he is free to exploit a wide range of English words covering a similar area of meaning and association he may hope to carry over the meaning of the sentence as a whole. Thus we have not felt obliged (as did the Revisers of 1881) to make an effort to render the same Greek word everywhere by the same English word. We have in this respect returned to the wholesome practice of King James's men, who (as they expressly state in their preface) recognized no such obligation. We have conceived our task to be that of understanding the

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original as precisely as we could (using all available aids), and then saying again in our own native idiom what we believed the author to be saying in his. We have found that in practice this frequently compelled us to make decisions where the older method of translation allowed a comfortable ambiguity. In such places we have been aware that we take a risk, but we have thought it our duty to take the risk rather than remain on the fence. But in no passage of doubtful meaning does the rendering adopted represent merely the preference of any single person.

The Joint Committee appointed a panel of scholars, drawn from various British universities, whom they believed to be representative of competent biblical scholarship in this country at the present time. The procedure was for one member of the panel to be invited to submit a draft translation of a particular book or group of books. This draft was circulated in typescript to members of the panel for their consideration. They then met together and discussed the draft round a table, verse by verse, sentence by sentence. Each member brought his view about the meaning of the original to the judgement of his fellows, and discussion was continued until they reached a common mind. There is probably no member of the panel who has not found himself compelled to give up, perhaps with lingering regret, a cherished view about the meaning of this or that difficult or doubtful passage. But each learned much from the others, and from the discipline of working towards a common mind. In the end we accept collective responsibility for the interpretation set forth in the text of our translation.

It should be said that our intention has been to offer a translation in the strict sense, and not a paraphrase, and we have not wished to encroach on the field of the commentator. But if the best commentary is a good translation, it is also true that every intelligent translation is in a sense a paraphrase. But if paraphrase means taking the liberty of introducing into a passage something which is not there, to elucidate the meaning which is there, it can be said that we have taken this liberty only with extreme caution, and in a very few passages, where without it we could see no way to attain our aim of making the meaning as clear as it could be made. Taken as a whole, our version claims to be a translation, free, it may be, rather than literal, but a faithful translation nevertheless, so far as we could compass it.

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In doing our work, we have constantly striven to follow our instructions and render the Greek, as we understood it, into the English of the present day, that is, into the natural vocabulary, constructions, and rhythms of contemporary speech. We have sought to avoid archaism, jargon, and all that is either stilted or slipshod. Since sound scholarship does not always carry with it a delicate sense of style, the Committee appointed a panel of literary advisers, to whom all the work of the translating panel has been submitted. They scrutinized it, once again, verse by verse and sentence by sentence, and took pains to secure the tone and level of language appropriate to the different kinds of writing to be found in the New Testament, whether narrative, familiar discourse, argument, rhetoric, or poetry. But always the overriding aims were accuracy and clarity. The final form of the version was reached by agreement between the two panels.

The translators are as conscious as anyone can be of the limitations and imperfections of their work. No one who has not tried it can know how impossible an art translation is. Only those who have meditated long upon the Greek original are aware of the richness and subtlety of meaning that may lie even within the most apparently simple sentence, or know the despair that attends all efforts to bring it out through the medium of a different language. Yet we may hope that we have been able to convey to our readers something at least of what the New Testament has said to us during these years of work, and trust that under the providence of Almighty God this translation may open the truth of the scriptures to many who have been hindered in their approach to it by barriers of language.

Note: In this edition the translators' footnotes are kept to a minimum. As a rule they are included only where it seems necessary to explain the omission of a verse of the traditional text which is not found in the best manuscripts.

MARGINAL NUMBERS

The conventional verse divisions in the New Testament date only from 1551 and have no basis in the manuscripts. Any system of division into numbered verses is foreign to the spirit of this translation, which is intended to convey the meaning in continuous natural English rather than to correspond sentence by sentence with the Greek.

For purposes of reference, and of comparison with other translations, verse numbers are placed in the margin opposite the line in which the first word belonging to the verse in question appears. Sometimes, however, successive verses are combined in a continuous English sentence, so that the precise point where a new verse begins cannot be fixed; occasionally in the interests of clarity the order of successive verses is reversed (e.g. at John 4. 7, 8).

323	The Letter of Paul to the Colossians
329	The Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians
335	The First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians
340	The Second Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians
343	The First Letter of Paul to Timothy
350	The Second Letter of Paul to Timothy
355	The Letter of Paul to Titus
358	The Letter of Paul to Philemon
360	A Letter to Hebrews
377	A Letter of James
383	The First Letter of Peter
390	The Second Letter of Peter
394	The First Letter of John
400	The Second Letter of John
401	The Third Letter of John
402	A Letter of Jude

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THE GOSPEL

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THE
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
MATTHEW

THE COMING OF CHRIST

A TABLE OF THE DESCENT of Jesus Christ, 1
son of David, son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac of Jacob, 2
Jacob of Judah and his brothers, Judah of Perez and Zarah 3
(their mother was Tamar), Perez of Hezron, Hezron of Ram,
Ram of Amminadab, Amminadab of Nahshon, Nahshon 4
of Salma, Salma of Boaz (his mother was Rahab), Boaz of 5
Obed (his mother was Ruth), Obed of Jesse; and Jesse 6
was the father of King David.

David was the father of Solomon (his mother had been 7
the wife of Uriah), Solomon of Rehoboam, Rehoboam of 8
Abijah, Abijah of Asa, Asa of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat 9
of Joram, Joram of Azariah, Azariah of Jotham, Jotham of 10
Ahaz, Ahaz of Hezekiah, Hezekiah of Manasseh, Manasseh 11
of Amon, Amon of Josiah; and Josiah was the father of
Jeconiah and his brothers at the time of the deportation
to Babylon.

After the deportation Jeconiah was the father of Sheal- 12
tiel, Shealtiel of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel of Abiud, Abiud 13
of Eliakim, Eliakim of Azor, Azor of Zadok, Zadok of 14
Achim, Achim of Eliud, Eliud of Eleazar, Eleazar of 15
Matthan, Matthan of Jacob, Jacob of Joseph, the husband 16
of Mary, who gave birth to Jesus called Messiah.

There were thus fourteen generations in all from Abra- 17
ham to David, fourteen from David until the deportation 18
to Babylon, and fourteen from the deportation until the 19
Messiah.

THIS IS THE STORY of the birth of the Messiah. Mary 18
his mother was betrothed to Joseph; before their marriage 19
she found that she was with child by the Holy Spirit.
Being a man of principle, and at the same time wanting to

save her from exposure, Joseph desired to have the marriage contract set aside quietly. He had resolved on this, when an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. 'Joseph son of David,' said the angel, 'do not be afraid to take Mary home with you as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She will bear a son; and you shall give him the name Jesus (Saviour), for he will save his people from their sins.' All this happened in order to fulfil what the Lord declared through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and he shall be called Emmanuel', a name which means 'God is with us'. Rising from sleep Joseph did as the angel had directed him; he took Mary home to be his wife, but had no intercourse with her until her son was born. And he named the child Jesus.

2 JESUS WAS BORN at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of Herod. After his birth astrologers from the east arrived in Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who is born to be king of the Jews? We observed the rising of his star, and we have come to pay him homage.' King Herod was greatly perturbed when he heard this; and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the chief priests and lawyers of the Jewish people, and put before them the question: 'Where is it that the Messiah is to be born?' 'At Bethlehem in Judaea', they replied; and they referred him to the prophecy which reads: 'Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are far from least in the eyes of the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a leader to be the shepherd of my people Israel.'

7 Herod next called the astrologers to meet him in private, and ascertained from them the time when the star had appeared. He then sent them on to Bethlehem, and said, 'Go and make a careful inquiry for the child. When you have found him, report to me, so that I may go myself and pay him homage.'

9 They set out at the king's bidding; and the star which they had seen at its rising went ahead of them until it stopped above the place where the child lay. At the sight of the star they were overjoyed. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and bowed to the ground in homage to him; then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned home another way.

After they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said to him, 'Rise up, take the child and his mother and escape with them to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to do away with him.' So Joseph rose from sleep, and taking mother and child by night he went away with them to Egypt, and there he stayed till Herod's death. This was to fulfil what the Lord had declared through the prophet: 'I called my son out of Egypt.'

When Herod saw how the astrologers had tricked him he fell into a passion, and gave orders for the massacre of all children in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, of the age of two years or less, corresponding with the time he had ascertained from the astrologers. So the words spoken through Jeremiah the prophet were fulfilled: 'A voice was heard in Rama, wailing and loud laments; it was Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing all consolation, because they were no more.'

The time came that Herod died; and an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said to him, 'Rise up, take the child and his mother, and go with them to the land of Israel, for the men who threatened the child's life are dead.' So he rose, took mother and child with him, and came to the land of Israel. Hearing, however, that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as king of Judaea, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by a dream, he withdrew to the region of Galilee; there he settled in a town called Nazareth. This was to fulfil the words spoken through the prophets: 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'

ABOUT THAT TIME John the Baptist appeared as a preacher in the Judaeian wilderness; his theme was: 'Repent; for the kingdom of Heaven is upon you!' It is of him that the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, 'A voice crying aloud in the wilderness, "Prepare a way for the Lord; clear a straight path for him."'

John's clothing was a rough coat of camel's hair, with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. They flocked to him from Jerusalem, from all Judaea, and the whole Jordan valley, and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them: 'You vipers' brood! Who warned you to escape from the coming retribution?

8 9 Then prove your repentance by the fruit it bears; and do not presume to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father." I tell you that God can make children for
 10 Abraham out of these stones here. Already the axe is
 11 laid to the roots of the trees; and every tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown on the fire.
 12 I baptize you with water, for repentance; but the one who comes after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to take off his shoes; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His shovel is ready in his hand and he will winnow his threshing-floor; the wheat he will gather into his granary, but he will burn the chaff on a fire that can never go out.'

13 Then Jesus arrived at the Jordan from Galilee, and came
 14 to John to be baptized by him. John tried to dissuade him. 'Do you come to me?' he said; 'I need rather to be baptized by you.' Jesus replied, 'Let it be so for the present; we do well to conform in this way with all that God requires.' John then allowed him to come. After baptism
 16 Jesus came up out of the water at once, and at that moment heaven opened; he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove to alight upon him; and a voice from
 17 heaven was heard saying, 'This is my Son, my Beloved, on whom my favour rests.'

4 JESUS WAS THEN LED AWAY by the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted by the devil.

2 For forty days and nights he fasted, and at the end of
 3 them he was famished. The tempter approached him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become
 4 bread.' Jesus answered, 'Scripture says, "Man cannot live on bread alone; he lives on every word that God utters."'

5 The devil then took him to the Holy City and set him on
 6 the parapet of the temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for Scripture says, "He will put his angels in charge of you, and they will support you in their arms, for fear you should strike your foot against
 7 a stone."' Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says again, "You are not to put the Lord your God to the test."'

8 Once again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their
 9 glory. 'All these', he said, 'I will give you, if you will only
 10 fall down and do me homage.' But Jesus said, 'Begone, Satan; Scripture says, "You shall do homage to the Lord your God and worship him alone."'

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and waited on him. 11

When he heard that John had been arrested, Jesus withdrew to Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and settled at Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee, in the district of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was in fulfilment of the passage in the prophet Isaiah which tells of 'the land of Zebulun, the land of Naphtali, the road by the sea, the land beyond Jordan, heathen Galilee', and says: 12 13 14 15

'The people that lived in darkness saw a great light; 16
Light dawned on the dwellers in the land of death's dark shadow.'

From that day Jesus began to proclaim the message: 'Repent; for the kingdom of Heaven is upon you.' 17

JESUS WAS WALKING by the Sea of Galilee when he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the lake; for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, 'Come with me, and I will make you fishers of men.' They left their nets at once and followed him. 18 19 20

He went on, and saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in the boat with their father Zebedee, overhauling their nets. He called them, and at once they left the boat and their father, and followed him. 21 22

He went round the whole of Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and curing whatever illness or infirmity there was among the people. His fame reached the whole of Syria; and sufferers from every kind of illness, racked with pain, possessed by devils, epileptic, or paralysed, were all brought to him, and he cured them. Great crowds also followed him, from Galilee and the Ten Towns, from Jerusalem and Judaea, and from Transjordan. 23 24 25 26 27

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

WHEN HE SAW the crowds he went up the hill. 5
There he took his seat, and when his disciples had gathered round him he began to address them. And this is the teaching he gave: 2

'How blest are those who know that they are poor; 3
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.'

- 4 How blest are the sorrowful;
they shall find consolation.
- 5 How blest are those of a gentle spirit;
they shall have the earth for their possession.
- 6 How blest are those who hunger and thirst to see right
prevail;
they shall be satisfied.
- 7 How blest are those who show mercy;
mercy shall be shown to them.
- 8 How blest are those whose hearts are pure;
they shall see God.
- 9 How blest are the peacemakers;
God shall call them his sons.
- 10 How blest are those who have suffered persecution for
the cause of right;
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
- 11 'How blest you are, when you suffer insults and persecu-
12 tion and every kind of calumny for my sake. Accept it
with gladness and exultation, for you have a rich reward
in heaven; in the same way they persecuted the prophets
before you.
- 13 'You are salt to the world. And if salt becomes taste-
less, how is its saltness to be restored? It is now good for
nothing but to be thrown away and trodden underfoot.
- 14 'You are light for all the world. A town that stands on
15 a hill cannot be hidden. When a lamp is lit, it is not put
under the meal-tub, but on the lamp-stand, where it gives
16 light to everyone in the house. And you, like the lamp,
must shed light among your fellows, so that, when they
see the good you do, they may give praise to your Father
in heaven.
- 17 'DO NOT SUPPOSE that I have come to abolish the
Law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to
18 complete. I tell you this: so long as heaven and earth
endure, not a letter, not a stroke, will disappear from the
19 Law until all that must happen has happened. If any man
therefore sets aside even the least of the Law's demands,
and teaches others to do the same, he will have the lowest
place in the kingdom of Heaven, whereas anyone who
keeps the Law and teaches others so will stand high in
20 the kingdom of Heaven. I tell you, unless you show your-
selves far better men than the Pharisees and the doctors of
the law, you can never enter the kingdom of Heaven.