

## GENERAL EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Since its publication in 1966 the Jerusalem Bible has become widely used for liturgical purposes, for study and for private reading. Credit both for the idea of the translation of the French *Bible de Jérusalem* and for the great labours involved in its execution belongs to Alexander Jones; it is sad that he did not live to see the full impact of his work. Both as an intelligible modern translation and as a well laid-out and easily manageable book, the Jerusalem Bible set a new standard for versions of the Bible. However, in 1973 a new edition of the *Bible de Jérusalem* was published, which incorporated progress in scholarship over the two decades since the preparation of its first edition. The introductions and notes were often widely changed to take account of linguistic, archaeological and theological advances, and the text itself in some instances reflected new understanding of the originals.

This 1973 revision was important enough to warrant a completely new edition of the English-language *Jerusalem Bible*. In this new edition the introductions and notes are drawn from that revision, with some additional changes especially in the introductions and notes to the New Testament to take into account further recent advances in scholarship. The biblical text of the first edition was occasionally criticised for following the French translation more closely than the originals. In this edition the translation has been made directly from the Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic. Only where the text admits of more than one interpretation has the option chosen by the *Bible de Jérusalem* been followed, unless permission to adopt another view was granted by the editors of that work. The character of the *Jerusalem Bible* as primarily a study Bible has been kept constantly in mind, and for that reason accuracy of translation has been a prime consideration. Paraphrase has been avoided more rigorously than in the first edition; care has been taken that in parallel passages (for example in the first three gospels) the similarities and differences should be mirrored exactly in the translation. Key terms in the originals, especially those theological key concepts on which there is a major theological note, have been rendered throughout (with very few exceptions) by the same English word, instead of by the variety of words used in the first edition. At the same time the widespread liturgical use of this version has been taken into account; while it is hoped that the translation is fresh and lively, care has been taken to reproduce the dignity of the originals by a certain measured phrasing and avoidance of the colloquial. Considerable efforts have also been made, though not at all costs, to soften or avoid the inbuilt preference of the English language, a preference now found so offensive by some people, for the masculine; the word of the Lord concerns women and men equally.

It has seemed wise to retain the spelling of the proper names traditional in English-speaking lands. Many names in biblical Hebrew have a meaning: for instance 'Adonijah' means 'My Lord is Yah' (Yahweh). Others are given a meaning by a more or less forced pun. Many of these meanings

are given in the footnotes. In the rendering of Hebrew words in the footnotes, etc., a more modern system of transliteration is, however, used, thus enabling the reader to come closer to the original sounds. This is often important for onomatopoeia and to understand how textual corruption has occurred.

One acute difficulty was the choice of system when modern equivalents for weights and measures were required. In some English-speaking countries the metric system is rapidly gaining ground, while others, notably the United States, stick firmly to the imperial. Finally it seemed that both systems were needed.

For this edition the alphabetical table of major footnotes has been entirely remade in a way which will, it is hoped, make it more serviceable. Two indexes of proper names have been added, personal and geographical, giving the principal biblical passages in which they occur, as well as important footnotes. The maps have also been completely redesigned.

A list of the original collaborators in the 1966 edition may be found on page 2109. In many instances this translation has used their work widely, but they cannot be considered responsible for the resultant version. The initial draft of almost the whole of the Old Testament was prepared by Mr Alan Neame, and credit for the skilful translation must go to him. The publisher's editors, at first Mr W. H. Saumarez-Smith, and for the major part of the work the Revd Cecil Hargreaves, have done far more than their job; especially the latter has been an exciting partner to work with, whose patience, inventiveness and tact have alike been a joy. The linchpin at the publisher's office, who has co-ordinated all our efforts, has been Mr H. P. Jolowicz; his untiring and painstaking accuracy has ensured the consistency and regularity of this volume. The marginal references throughout the Bible have been reviewed by the Revd David Pope, working under difficult circumstances with impressive patience. A number of consultants who read drafts at an early stage of the work have asked that their names should not be mentioned; to them and even more to the consultants in all five continents who criticised the final drafts, and suggested many improvements, I am most grateful. The names of Professor Kenneth Grayston and Canon Douglas Webster, who worked through the whole Bible, must not go unmentioned. During the whole work my monastic brethren and my students of all ages have provided a constant check and incentive; their criticisms and suggestions have done much to improve both the dignity and the intelligibility of the work. The impatience of the young with obscurity or technicality has been a constant incentive to clarity of thought, while the love and reverence of seniors for the sacred text has helped to keep at bay anything outrageous or slipshod. Over the five years since he asked me to undertake the work, consultation with Père Benoît of the *Ecole biblique* in Jerusalem, whether in our series of letters or in our meetings at Ampleforth, Rome or Jerusalem, has been one of the pleasures of the project; while we have not always agreed, his openness and still youthful enthusiasm have invariably been a stimulus, and his concern to make this volume worthy of the *Bible de Jérusalem* an inspiration to the highest standards.

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