

2.8. THE CATHOLIC BIBLE IN ENGLAND

The Douay version or Catholic Bible originated in the need for a translation of the Bible for use of Roman Catholics during a time of religious controversy (the Reformation), the many Protestant versions, preceding the Authorized Version of 1611, having been used by reformers for polemical purposes. The work of preparation was undertaken by the members of the English College at Douai, in Flanders, founded by William Allen (afterwards Cardinal Allen) in 1568, the translation being chiefly the work of Gregory Martin, formerly of St John's College, Oxford, revised by Thomas Worthington, Richard Bristowe, John Reynolds, and Allen himself.

In view of the intended purpose of the translation, the scholars worked directly, not from the original Hebrew or Greek, but from the Latin Vulgate of St Jerome, this being the official text authorized by the Catholic Church. This text, it should be noted, was in any case held to be more reliable than others, in view of the authenticity of the source texts to which Jerome had access at the time. Many ecclesiastical terms, derived from Latin, were retained; in some cases, the Latin word itself being kept, in an Anglicized form. The Douay-Reims Bible, not surprisingly in view of its intended polemical use, included a comprehensive array of annotations interpreting the text in conformity with Catholic orthodoxy, to combat the equally assertive biblical commentaries of Reformers. The result, admittedly, was somewhat cumbersome, but the standard of scholarship was relatively high.

In 1578, the college was temporarily transferred, on account of political troubles, from Douai to Reims, and the translation of the New Testament was published there in 1582. The Old Testament was delayed until the whole Bible was published in 1609 and 1610, by which time the college had returned to Douai. The New Testament, thus, appeared nearly thirty years before the Authorized Version and, although not acknowledged, influenced the latter to a considerable extent.

Although the Bibles used by the Catholics of England and Ireland subsequently are popularly styled the Douay Version, from the eighteenth century into the twentieth century they were, in fact, the result of a series of revisions by Bishop Richard Challoner (published 1749-52), in most cases his changes bringing the Catholic Bible closer to the Authorized Version. Challoner's revision considerably reduced the annotations. A revision of the Reims-Challoner New Testament was published by the Catholic Bible Society of America in 1941, sponsored by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. The Old Testament was, in fact, a new translation, based now on the source texts (1948-69). In 1970 a new version of the New Testament, based now on the Greek rather than the Latin

Vulgate, was published. Other versions, initiated by or intended for the Roman Catholic Church, included *The Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures*, and the version by one man, Mgr. Ronald Knox (1945-9), the limitations of this work clearly indicated, since it is described as '[a] translation of the Latin Vulgate in the light of the Hebrew and Greek originals'. Movement towards an ecumenical Bible translation takes a step forward with *The Jerusalem Bible*, inspired by and largely based on the French Dominican translation *La Bible de Jérusalem* (1956). The English version, inspired by and referring to the French, returns to the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek originals. Since use of the original sources, as it were following the example of St Jerome himself, is now accepted, many of the obstacles in the way of an ecumenical translation have been removed.

Gregory Martin (1540-82), principle translator of the Douay Version, was assisted by several of the other scholars then residing in the English College at Douay, but it was Martin who made the whole translation in the first instance. He was a brilliant scholar and linguist, ordained priest in 1573, three years later going to Rome to assist Allen in the foundation of the English College there. He remained in Rome two years, then being recalled by Allen to Reims.

It was after his return from Rome that he embarked on his Bible translation. In accuracy and scholarship, as noted, if not in rhythmic harmony, it was superior to any of the English versions which had preceded it. Beside his Bible translation, Martin published a *Treatise of Schisme* (Douai, 1578); *Discovery of the Manifold Corruptions of the Holy Scriptures by the Heretikes of our Daies* (Reims, 1582; this attacked various Protestant translations and occasioned a fierce paragraph by paragraph refutation by William Fulke, in 1583); *Treatise of Christian Peregrination* (Reims, 1583); *Of the Love of the Soul* (St Omer, 1603); and *Gregorius Martinus ad Adolphum Mekerchum pro veteri et vera Græcarum Literarum Pronunciatione* (Oxford, 1712).

From Gregory Martin, 'The Preface to the Reader', *The New Testament of Jesus Christ* (1582)

2. Which translation we do not for all that publish upon erroneous opinion of necessity that the Holy Scriptures should always be in our mother tongue, or that they ought, or were ordained by God, to be read indifferently of all, or could be easily understood of everyone that reads or hears them in a known language, or that they were not often through man's malice or infirmity pernicious and much hurtful to many; or that we generally and absolutely deemed it more convenient in itself, and more agreeable to God's word and honour or edification of the faithful, to have them turned into vulgar tongues, than to be kept and studied only in the ecclesiastical learned languages. Not for

these nor any such like causes do we translate this sacred book, but upon special consideration of the present time, state, and condition of our country, unto which diverse things are either necessary or profitable and medicinable now that otherwise in the peace of the Church were neither much requisite nor perchance wholly tolerable.

3. In this matter, to mark only the wisdom and moderation of holy Church and the governors thereof on the one side, and the indiscreet zeal of the popular, and their factious leaders, on the other, is a high point of prudence. These latter, partly of simplicity, partly of curiosity, and specially of pride and disobedience, have made claim in this case for the common people, with plausible pretences many, but good reasons none at all. The other, to whom Christ has given charge of our souls, the dispensing of God's mysteries and treasures (among which Holy Scripture is no small store) and the feeding of his family in season with food fit for every sort, have neither of old nor of late ever wholly condemned all vulgar versions of Scripture, nor have at any time generally forbidden the faithful to read the same; yet they have not by public authority prescribed, commanded, or authentically ever recommended any such interpretation to be indifferently used of all men.

[...]

4. [...] In our own country, notwithstanding the Latin tongue was ever (to use Venerable Bede's words) common to all the provinces of the same for meditation or study of Scriptures, and no vulgar translation commonly used or occupied of the multitude, yet there were extant in English even before the troubles that Wycliffe and his followers raised in our Church, as appears as well by some pieces yet remaining as by a provincial Constitution of Thomas Arundel Archbishop of Canterbury, in a Council held at Oxford, where strait provision was made that no heretical version set forth by Wycliffe or his adherents should be suffered, nor any other in or after his time be published or permitted to be read, being not approved and allowed by the Diocesan before, alleaging St. Hierom for the difficulty and danger of interpreting the holy Scripture out of one tongue into another, though by learned and Catholic men. So also it is there insinuated that neither the translations set forth before the heretic's time nor other afterward being approved by the lawful ordinaries, were ever in our country wholly forbidden, though they were not (to say the truth) in quiet and better times (much less when the people were prone to alteration heresy, or novelty), either hastily admitted ordinarily read of the vulgar, but used only, or specially, of some devout religious and contemplative persons, in reverence, secrecy, and silence, for their spiritual comfort.

5. Now since Luther's revolt also, diverse learned Catholics, for the more speedy abolishing of a number of false and impious translations put forth by sundry sects, and for the better preservation or reclaim of many good souls endangered thereby, have published the Bible in the several languages of almost all the principal provinces of the Latin Church; no other books in the world being so pernicious as heretical translations of

the Scriptures, poisoning the people under colour of divine authority, and not many other remedies being more sovereign against the same (if it be used in order discretion and humility) than the truth, faithful, and sincere interpretation opposed thereunto.

6. Which causes the holy Church not to forbid utterly any Catholic translation, though she allow not the publishing or reading of any absolutely and without exception, or limitation: knowing by her divine and most sincere wisdom, how, where, when, and to whom these her Master's and Spouse's gifts are to be bestowed to the most good of the faithful; and therefore neither generally permits that which must needs do hurt to the unworthy nor absolutely condemns that which may do much good to the worthy. [...]

Genesis 11, 'The Tower of Babel'

From the Douay-Reims translation of the Bible (1609–10)

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1 And the earth was of one tongue, and of the same speech. 2 And when they removed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Sennaar, and dwelt in it. 3 And each one said to his neighbour: Come, let us make brick, and bake them with fire. And they had brick instead of stones, and slime instead of mortar. 4 And they said: Come, let us make a city and a tower, the top whereof may reach to heaven: and let us make our name famous before we be scattered abroad into all lands. 5 And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of Adam were building.

6 And he said: Behold, it is one people, and all have one tongue: and they have begun to do this, neither will they leave off from their designs, till they accomplish them in deed. 7 Come ye, therefore, let us go down, and there confound their tongue, that they may not understand one another's speech. 8 And so the Lord scattered them from that place into all lands, and they ceased to build the city. 9 And therefore the name thereof was called *Babel*, because there the language of the whole earth was confounded: and from thence the Lord scattered them abroad upon the face of all countries.

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Latin Vulgate Translation

1. erat autem terra labii unius et sermonum eorundem
2. cumque proficiscerentur de oriente invenerunt campum in terra Sennaar et habitaverunt in eo
3. dixitque alter ad proximum suum venite faciamus lateres et coquamus eos igni habueruntque lateres pro saxis et bitumen pro cemento
4. et dixerunt venite faciamus nobis civitatem et turrem cuius culmen pertingat ad caelum et celebremus nomen nostrum antequam dividamur in universas terras
5. descendit autem Dominus ut videret civitatem et turrem quam aedificabant filii Adam

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6. et dixit ecce unus est populus et unum labium omnibus coeperuntque hoc facere nec desistent a cogitationibus suis donec eas opere compleant
7. venite igitur descendamus et confundamus ibi linguam eorum ut non audiat unusquisque vocem proximi sui
8. atque ita divisit eos Dominus ex illo loco in universas terras et cessaverunt aedificare civitatem
9. et idcirco vocatum est nomen eius Babel quia ibi confusum est labium universae terrae et inde dispersit eos Dominus super faciem cunctarum regionum

2.9. THE AUTHORIZED (KING JAMES) VERSION OF THE BIBLE

Miles Smith (d. 1624), Classical scholar and orientalist, was one of the translators appointed by James I to make a new version of the Bible, and was also assigned the task of writing the preface. Educated at Oxford, he served in a variety of ecclesiastical positions, being rewarded for his work on the Bible with the bishopric of Gloucester. His lengthy preface, excerpts from which are included below, is frequently omitted from editions of the King James Bible.

It was in the first year of his reign that King James held a conference at Hampton Court (1604), which authorized fifty-four scholars to undertake a revision of the existing English translations of the Bible. A list of fifteen rules was drawn up, the first being that the translators should follow the Bishops Bible (1568) as closely as possible, this being largely based on Tyndale's translation (1525, 1531; see Sect. 2.3, above). The committee's work was undertaken in a non-competitive, scholarly, and, for the time, remarkably unprejudiced fashion. The King's objective was similar to that of Pope Damasus when charging Jerome with the revision of the texts of the Latin Bible, namely, in the interest of unity, to arrive at a single authoritative text. He was also concerned to heal divisions, working towards a religious consensus in what was clearly a dangerous situation, with the divisions in Christianity abroad and at home.

The influence of this text on English literature has been enormous, indeed overwhelming at times, even negatively, as Ezra Pound was to note with regard to translations of Homer, which he characterized as 'King James fustian'. So seductive are its cadences that the Authorized Version is seen as one of the most important literary works in the English language, for which reason we include two other striking excerpts, in addition to the Babel story.

Smith reiterates, with numerous examples, the populist case for making the Scriptures accessible in the vernacular, 'for the behoof and edifying of the unlearned which [...] had souls to be saved as well...' He contrasts this inclusiveness with the attitude of the Catholic Church, which had just produced its own translation into English of the Bible (Reims/Douay, 1582, 1609, see Sect. 2.8, above). This, he claimed, was reluctantly undertaken: 'Yea, so unwilling they are to communicate the Scriptures to the people's understanding in any sort, that they are not ashamed to confess that we forced them to translate it into English against their wills.' Later he notes that, for instance, with regard to ecclesiastical terms, he and his colleagues have avoided the obscure terms employed by the 'Papists', which might seem to defeat the object of the operation.

The introduction includes a short history of Bible translation and reiterates that the translators are building on the work of their predecessors, notably of St Jerome. The polemic with the Catholic translators still continued, but in general the tone is conciliatory.

From 'The Translators to the Reader', Preface to the King James Version of the Bible, 1611

Happy is the man that delighted in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night.

But how shall men meditate in that, which they cannot understand? How shall they understand that which is kept close in an unknown tongue? as it is written, 'Except I know the power of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh, a Barbarian, and he that speaketh, shall be a Barbarian to me.' [1 Cor. 14]

[...]

Therefore as one complaineth, that always in the Senate of Rome, there was one or other that called for an interpreter: [Cicero 5 :: de finibus.] so lest the Church be driven to the like exigent, it is necessary to have translations in a readiness. Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most Holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water, even as Jacob rolled away the stone from the mouth of the well, by which means the flocks of Laban were watered [Gen. 29: 10]. Indeed without translation into the vulgar tongue, the unlearned are but like children at Jacob's well (which is deep) [John 4: 11] without a bucket or something to draw with; or as that person mentioned by Isaiah, to whom when a sealed book was delivered, with this motion, 'Read this, I pray thee,' he was fain to make this answer, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.' [Isa. 29: 11]

[...]

Many men's mouths have been open a good while (and yet are not stopped) with speeches about the Translation so long in hand, or rather perusale of Translations made before: and ask what may be the reason, what the necessity of the employment: Hath the Church been deceived, say they, all this while? Hath her sweet bread been mingled with leaven, here silver with dross, her wine with water, her milk with lime? (Lacte gypsum male miscetur, saith S. Ireney,) [S. Iren. 3. lib. cap. 19.] We hoped that we had been in the right way, that we had the Oracles of God delivered unto us, and that though all the world had cause to be offended and to complain, yet that we had none. Hath the nurse holden out the breast, and nothing but wind in it? Hath the bread been delivered by the fathers of the Church, and the same proved to be lapidosus, as Seneca speaketh? What is it to handle the word of God deceitfully, if this be not? Thus certain brethren. Also the adversaries of Judah and Jerusalem, like Sanballat in Nehemiah, mock, as we hear, both the work and the workmen, saying; 'What do these weak Jews, etc. will they make the

stones whole again out of the heaps of dust which are burnt? although they build, yet if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stony wall.” [Neh. 4: 3] Was their Translation good before? Why do they now mend it? Was it not good? Why then was it obtruded to the people? Yea, why did the Catholics (meaning Popish Romanlets) always go in jeopardy, for refusing to go to hear it? Nay, if it must be translated into English, Catholics are fittest to do it. They have learning, and they know when a thing is well, they can manure de tabula. We will answer them both briefly: and the former, being brethren, thus, with S. Jerome, ‘*Damnamus veteres? Minime, sed post priorum studia in domo Domini quod possumus laboramus.*’ [S. Jerome. Apolog. advers. Ruffin.] That is, ‘Do we condemn the ancient? In no case: but after the endeavors of them that were before us, we take the best pains we can in the house of God.’ As if he said, Being provoked by the example of the learned men that lived before my time, I have thought it my duty, to assay whether my talent in the knowledge of the tongues, may be profitable in any measure to God’s Church, lest I should seem to labour in them in vain, and lest I should be thought to glory in men, (although ancient,) above that which was in them. Thus S. Jerome may be thought to speak.

And to the same effect say we, that we are so far oft from condemning any of their labours that travailed before us in this kind [...] that we acknowledge them to have been raised up of God, for the building and furnishing of his Church, and that they deserve to be had of us and of posterity in everlasting remembrance. [...] Yet for all that, as nothing is begun and perfected at the same time, and the later thoughts are thought to be the Wiser: so, if We building upon their foundation that went before us, and being holpen by their labours, do endeavor to make that better which they left so good; no man, we are sure, hath cause to mislike us; they, we persuade ourselves, if they were alive, would thank us. [...]

But it is high time to leave them [earlier translators], and to show in brief what we proposed to ourselves, and what course we held in this our perusal and survey of the Bible. Truly (good Christian Reader) we never thought from the beginning, that we should need to make a new Translation, nor yet to make of a bad one a good one, (for then the imputation of Sixtus had been true in some sort, that our people had been fed with gall of Dragons instead of wine, with whey instead of milk:) but to make a good one better, or out of many good ones, one principal good one, not justly to be excepted against; that hath been our endeavor, that our mark. [...] S. Jerome maketh no mention of the Greek tongue, wherein yet he did excel, because he translated not the old Testament out of Greek, but out of Hebrew. And in what sort did these assemble? In the trust of their own knowledge, or of their sharpness of wit, or deepness of judgment, as it were in an arm of flesh? At no hand. They trusted in him that hath the key of David, opening and no man shutting; they prayed to the Lord the Father of our Lord, to the effect that S. Augustine did; ‘O let thy Scriptures be my pure delight, let me not be deceived in them, neither let

me deceive by them.' [S. Aug. lib. II. Confess. cap. 2.] In this confidence, and with this devotion did they assemble together; not too many, lest one should trouble another; and yet many, lest many things haply might escape them. If you ask what they had before them, truly it was the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, the Greek of the New. These are the two golden pipes, or rather conduits, where-through the olive branches empty themselves into the gold. Saint Augustine calleth them precedent, or original tongues; [S. August. 3. de doct. c. 3. etc.] Saint Jerome, fountains. [S. Jerome. ad Sunjam et Fretel.] The same Saint Jerome affirmeth, [S. Jerome. ad Lucinium, Diet. 9 ut veterum.] and Gratian hath not spared to put it into his Decree, That 'as the credit of the old Books' (he meaneth of the Old Testament) 'is to be tried by the Hebrew Volumes, so of the New by the Greek tongue,' he meaneth by the original Greek. If truth be tried by these tongues, then whence should a Translation be made, but out of them? These tongues therefore, the Scriptures we say in those tongues, we set before us to translate, being the tongues wherein God was pleased to speak to his Church by the Prophets and Apostles. Neither did we run over the work with that posting haste that the Septuagint did, if that be true which is reported of them, that they finished it in 72 days; [Joseph. Antiq. fib. 12.] neither were we barred or hindered from going over it again, having once done it, like S. Jerome, if that be true which himself reporteth, that he could no sooner write anything, but presently it was caught from him, and published, and he could not have leave to mend it: [S. Jerome. ad Pammac. pro libr. advers. Iovinian.] neither, to be short, were we the first that fell in hand with translating the Scripture into English, and consequently destitute of former helps, as it is written of Origen, that he was the first in a manner, that put his hand to write Commentaries upon the Scriptures, [Sophoc. in Elect.] and therefore no marvel, if he overshot himself many times. None of these things: the work hath not been huddled up in 72 days, but hath cost the workmen, as light as it seemeth, the pains of twice seven times seventy two days and more: matters of such weight and consequence are to be speeded with maturity: for in a business of movement a man feareth not the blame of convenient slackness. [S. Chrysost, in II. Thess. cap. 2.] Neither did we think much to consult the Translators or Commentators, Chaldee, Hebrew, Syrian, Greek or Latin, no nor the Spanish, French, Italian, or Dutch; neither did we disdain to revise that which we had done, and to bring back to the anvil that which we had hammered: but having and using as great helps as were needful, and fearing no reproach for slowness, nor coveting praise for expedition, we have at length, through the good hand of the Lord upon us, brought the work to that pass that you see.

[...]

Another thing we think good to admonish thee of (gentle Reader) that we have not tied ourselves to an uniformity of phrasing, or to an identity of words, as some peradventure would wish that we had done, because they observe, that some learned men somewhere, have been as exact as they could that way. Truly, that we might not vary

from the sense of that which we had translated before, if the word signified that same in both places (for there be some words that be not the same sense everywhere) we were especially careful, and made a conscience, according to our duty. But, that we should express the same notion in the same particular word; as for example, if we translate the Hebrew or Greek word once by PURPOSE, never to call it INTENT; if one where JOURNEYING, never TRAVELING; if one where THINK, never SUPPOSE; if one where PAIN, never ACHE; if one where JOY, never GLADNESS, etc. Thus to mince the matter, we thought to savour more of curiosity than wisdom, and that rather it would breed scorn in the Atheist, than bring profit to the godly Reader. For is the kingdom of God to become words or syllables? Why should we be in bondage to them if we may be free, use one precisely when we may use another no less fit, as commodiously?¹

[...]

Add hereunto, that niceness in words was always counted the next step to trifling, and so was to be curious about names too: also that we cannot follow a better pattern for elocution than God himself; therefore he using divers words, in his holy writ, and indifferently for one thing in nature: [see Euseb. li. 12. ex Platon.] we, if we will not be superstitious, may use the same liberty in our English versions out of Hebrew and Greek, for that copy or store that he hath given us. Lastly, we have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old Ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other, as when they put WASHING for BAPTISM, and CONGREGATION instead of CHURCH: as also on the other side we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists, in their AZIMES, TUNIKE, RATIONAL, HOLOCAUSTS, PRAEPUCE, PASCHE, and a number of such like, whereof their late Translation is full, and that of purpose to darken the sense, that since they must needs translate the Bible, yet by the language thereof, it may be kept from being understood. But we desire that the Scripture may speak like itself, as in the language of Canaan, that it may be understood even of the very vulgar.

[...]

EDITORS' NOTE

1. [This contrasts with the concern of a modern translator, Everett Fox (see Sect. 5.20, below), and before him, Buber and Rosenzweig (see Sect. 4.5, below), for verbal patterns (parallelisms, etc.).]

From the Authorized Version

Genesis II: 1–9

- 1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.
- 2 And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.
- 3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them throughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

- 4 And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top *may reach* unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.
- 5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded.
- 6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.
- 7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.
- 8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.
- 9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David

- 1 The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.
- 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
- 3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
- 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
- 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

St. John I: 1-5

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 The same was in the beginning with God.
- 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
- 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.