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Matthew's Beatitudes in English
A Comparative Study in the History of Translation

by

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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Theology

Acadia University
Spring Convocation 1999

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a comparative study of various English translations of the Matthean Beatitudes (Matthew 5.1-12) from Wyclif (1382) to the *Contemporary English Version* (1995). The standard Greek text of the New Testament (UBS GNT4) has been used as the basis for comparison of the various translations, for understanding the linguistic features of the "original," as well as for noting significant variants in the texts of the manuscripts.

A brief introduction to Matthew's Gospel is provided in Chapter 2, which sets the Beatitudes in the context of the Sermon on the Mount and in the context of the Gospel as a whole. The Beatitudes, as a genre of *gnomological* literature, are discussed with reference to literary parallels in the Scriptures and in other literature.

The heart of the thesis is to be found in Chapter 3, an historical survey of English Bible translations, with special emphasis on the work of William Tyndale as the father of the English Bible. Chapter 4 presents a tabulation of about thirty translations representing over 1000 years in the history of the English Bible. The translations presented attempt to be representative of both historical and theological considerations, but the choice has been – of necessity – selective, and has been limited by three factors: awareness, availability, and significance.

Chapter 5 briefly discusses the connections between language and theology, tradition and translation, with special emphasis on the effect of *intertextuality* on the process and results of various translations. Recognising the importance of the liturgical use of the Bible, six criteria for the thoughtful selection of a translation for public reading are offered without implying in which direction these guidelines might lead.

In Memoriam

Dr Carol J. Schlueter ✠ 1997

Rev'd Dr John H. C. Neeb ✠ 1997

Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine,
et lux perpetua luceat eis.

On the Beatitudes...

We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount.
Omar Bradley, Address on Armistice Day 1948

It's not the earth the meek inherit – it's the dirt!
Alan Lerner & Frederick Loewe, "The Seven Deadly Virtues," *Camelot*

The Be-Happy Attitudes
title of book by Robert Schuller

Dear brother, let this preaching of mine be of service to you, in the first place, against our squires, the jurists and sophists. ... Thus you may preserve in its purity the teaching of Christ in this [fifth] chapter of Matthew, instead of their asinine cunning and devilish dung.
Martin Luther, Preface to the *Sermon on the Mount*

Jesus says here what lots of Rabbis said in all ages.
H. Montefiore, *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings*

"Blessed is the man who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed," was the ninth beatitude.
Alexander Pope, Letter to Fortescue of 23 Sept., 1725

Blessed are the forgetful: for they get the better even of their blunders.
Friedrich Nietzche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

These are the words through which we must still hear the voice of Jesus; this is the *Sermon on the Mount* which, down the centuries, has left its mark on the church and on the world.
A. E. Harvey, *NEB: Companion to the New Testament*

Some have found [the Sermon on the Mount] a pernicious document, which, by presenting an utterly impossible ethic, has wrought incalculable harm in personal, social, and international life. ... Others have seen in it the finest statement of the highest ethic that mankind has known.
W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*

The fellowship of the beatitudes is the fellowship of the Crucified. With him it has lost all, and with him it has found all. From the cross there comes the call, "blessed, blessed."
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Et abiit opinio eius
in totam syriam
et obtulerunt ei omnes
male habentes
uariis languoribus
et tormentis
comprehensos
et qui daemonia
habebant et lunaticos
et paralyticos
et curauit eos
Et secutae sunt eum
turbae multae
de galilaea et decapoli
et hierosolymis
et iudaea et de
trans iordanen
Uidens autem turbas
ascendit in montem
et cum sedisset accesse
runt ad eum
discipuli eius
Et aperiens os suum
docebat eos dicens

Beati pauperes spu
quoniam ipsorum est
regnum caelorum
Beati mites quoniam
ipsi possidebunt
terram
Beati qui lugent nunc
quoniam ipsi
consolabuntur
Beati qui esuriunt
et sitiunt iustitiam
quoniam ipsi
saturabuntur
Beati misericordes
quoniam ipsi
misericordiam
consequentur
Beati mundo corde
quoniam ipsi dnm
uidebunt
Beati pacifici
quoniam ipsi filii
di uocabuntur
Beati qui persecutio
nem

Introduction

A basic assumption made in this thesis is that the Bible is one of the most (if not *the* most) influential books in the English-speaking world. For centuries it has been a "best seller" and today few homes are without a copy, or at least a portion, of the Bible. Within the canon of the Christian Scriptures, however, some documents and some passages have been more influential than others. For instance, among general readers, the Psalms and the Gospels continue to be more influential than (*e.g.*) the historical books of the Old Testament. The Twenty-third Psalm and passages such as the Sermon on the Mount are better known than many other parts of the Bible.

The Bible has been available in English for over 600 years. The English of Wyclif's time is quite different from that of our own. Modern English is a growing, ever-expanding language, capable of tremendous subtlety and nuance. It would be a reasonable expectation that the history of the translation of the Bible into English would reflect the radical changes that have taken place in the English language over the last 600 years. As will be shown in this study, this is not the case.

The proliferation of Biblical translations, particularly in the last century, has become a matter of interest and concern among scholars and among the general public (and not all of them church-goers). Outside of the churches, in a secular society that has been described as "post-Christian," certain Christian symbols remain, or at least secularised versions of them. The principal feasts of Christmas and Easter now must compete with flying reindeer and egg-laying rabbits. The cross can be found dangling from the ears of teenagers of both sexes, on the covers of CDs produced by rock bands, and on the top of the crown surmounting the badge on the doors of police cars. The Bible itself has become a secular icon, either despised or esteemed, usually in ignorance. A basic knowledge of the Scriptures is necessary for understanding much of English literature, as Northrop Frye once wrote:

> My interest in the subject [the connection of the Bible and English literature] began in my earliest days as a junior instructor, when I found myself teaching Milton and writing about Blake, two authors who were exceptionally Biblical even by the standards of English literature. I soon realized that a student of English literature who does not know the Bible does not understand a good deal of what is going on in what he reads: the most conscientious student will be continually misconstruing the implications, even the meaning.[1]

Frye might have had phrases such as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Joshua 9.21) or "the eleventh hour" (Matthew 20.9) or "the burden and heat of the day" (Matthew 20.12) in mind when he made this statement. These are phrases that have entered the language and have taken on a life of their own, a phenomenon known as "intertext" that will be discussed at the end of this study. The Beatitudes, and in particular, the Beatitudes from Matthew's Gospel, must be numbered among these well-known and influential passages of Scripture, both in literature and in theology.

Because of their popularity and influence on both theology and literature, the Beatitudes from Matthew's Gospel have been used in this thesis as a "test text" to perform a comparative study in the history of translation, beginning with the first complete Bible in anything resembling modern English, John Wyclif's 1382 translation of the Latin Vulgate. However, attempts at translation were made before Wyclif's monumental effort, and some consideration is given to early Anglo-Saxon versions, and in particular to the beautiful diglot Lindisfarne Gospels. Thus, from Lindisfarne to the 1995 *Contemporary English Version* about one thousand years in the history of the English Bible is covered. The process by which translations have been chosen for this study has of necessity been selective, and has been governed by three principles: *awareness* (some versions have doubtless been overlooked); *availability* (copies of some translations, such as the Matthew Bible, are very difficult, if not impossible, to locate);

[1] Northrop Frye, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Markham, Ont : Penguin Books, 1990), pp. xi-xii.

and *significance* (time and space have allowed for only the more "mainstream" versions to be considered in detail).[2]

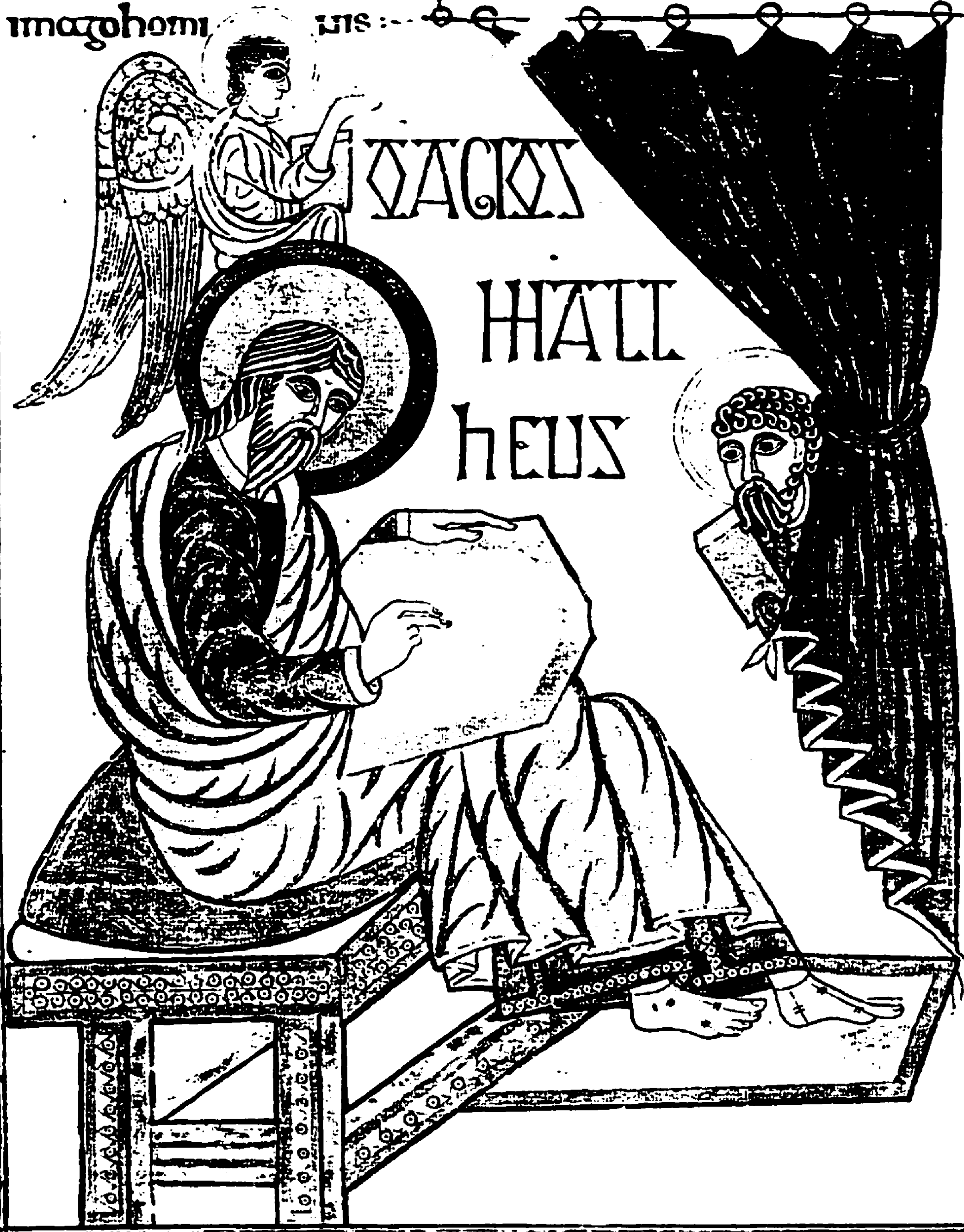
Along with the Greek and Latin texts of Matthew 5.1-12, the translations have provided the primary material for this study. The attentive reader will notice that three secondary resources have been relied upon particularly heavily. Two of these, W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison's contribution to the International Critical Commentary series (1988), and Hans Dieter Betz's *The Sermon on the Mount* in the Hermeneia series (1995) are encyclopedic in scope and take into consideration the most recent scholarship.[3] *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* has proven to be particularly helpful in illustrating the life of William Tyndale, and is a work which even an excellent modern biography of Tyndale such as the recent one by Daniell[4] uses.

When engaged in the study of Scripture, one needs to bear in mind the ancient admonition of Ecclesiastes 12.12: "One further warning, my son: there is no end to the writing of books, and much study is wearisome" (REB). Hopefully, without proving to be too "wearisome," this present study will show that the ceaseless writing of books about the Beatitudes, as well as the never-ending process of translating the Scriptures into English is justified by both the literary and theological importance of the subject.

[2] The approach to studying the Beatitudes is, in fact, two-fold. First, an attempt is made to understand the Beatitudes linguistically as they stand in the text of the Greek New Testament, and from a form-critical point-of-view as they are located within the context of their setting in Matthew's Gospel (Chapters 1 and 2). Second, the English translations themselves are considered, beginning with an historical survey of some significant translations; this is provided as an aid for understanding the "pedigree" of these translations, and for showing their interdependence (Chapter 3). This continues in Chapter 4 with a verse-by-verse tabulation of some translations of Matthew 5.1-12. Concluding observations will be found in Chapter 5.

[3] A very thorough bibliography of material pertaining to the Sermon on the Mount (to 1975) is available in Warren S. Kissinger's *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975).

[4] David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography*. London: Yale University Press, 1994.


imagohomi nis
OAGIOS
MATT
HEUS

Establishing the text

Neither of the two variants in the text of Matthew's Beatitudes (as noted in the United Bible Societies' fourth revised edition *Greek New Testament*[1]) is significant enough to change the meaning of the text. There is a question concerning the order of verses four and five, and another regarding the originality of the word ψευδόμενοι in verse eleven.[2]

Matthew 5. 4-5

These verses sometimes appear in the order v. 4 - v. 5 (mourners - the meek) and sometimes v. 5 - v. 4 (the meek - mourners). The possibility that v. 5 immediately followed v. 3 commends itself in that the parallelism of the poor in spirit / the meek (οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι / οἱ πραεῖς), and antithesis of kingdom of heaven / the earth are then kept together. However, if these two verses did originally stand together, it is unlikely that a scribe would introduce another verse between them precisely because of their close thematic connection.

The sequence v. 4 - v. 5 is followed in ℵ, B, C, W, Δ, Θ, and many miniscules; this order is also preserved in the majority of manuscripts of the Byzantine text. The alternative sequence is found in D, 33, many of the Church Fathers, and is represented in the Vulgate.[3]

---

[1] Stuttgart, 1994.

[2] I am dependent on Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. Second edition. (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft / United Bible Societies: Stuttgart, 1994), pp. 10-11.

[3] This provides one criterion for determining the influence of the Vulgate on a given translation. For instance, both Msgr. Knox's translation and *The Jerusalem Bible* (and its revision) maintain the Vulgate order (to name but two modern Roman Catholic translations).

Matthew 5.11

The reading ψευδόμενοι is given a {C} rating but is enclosed in square brackets in the body of the text of GNT^{IV}. The word appears in ℵ, B, C, W, Δ, Θ, many miniscules, the majority of the Byzantine texts, and the word, *mentientes*, appears in the Vulgate. Ψευδόμενοι is not found in D, nor does *mentientes* appear in a number of old Latin manuscripts. The witness of the Church Fathers is divided. The addition or omission of "falsely" does not affect the meaning of the text, and it is possible that its presence derives from a desire to clarify Jesus' broad statement.

Matthew 5.1-12 – Linguistic Analysis and Commentary

vv. 1, 2: Introduction: Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ· 2 καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων ...

It has been suggested that the mountainside setting of the Beatitudes established by these first two verses is derived from Mark 3.13[4], although that mountain is connected with the calling of the Twelve, not with the giving of instruction, as here. It is interesting to note that in Matthew, Jesus goes *up* into the mountain to deliver his teaching , whereas in Luke (6.17) he comes *down* the mountain and gives the "Sermon on the Plain." Εἰς τὸ ὄρος might mean "into the hills" in a general sense, or up a specific mountain associated with Jesus' teaching.[5] If the latter, then the specific location of that mountain must remain unknown, although two traditional possibilities are Karn Hattin near

---

[4] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7* A Continental Commentary. Translated from the German by W. C. Linss. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), p. 223; W. D. Davies and W. C. Allison, *Matthew*. International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), vol. I, pp. 420 f.

[5] Max Zerwick SJ, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*. Translated by Mary Grosvenor. (Rome: Editrice Pontifico Instituto Biblico, 1988), p. 9; W. C. Allen, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*. 3rd edition. International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993 [orig. 1907]), p. 38

Tiberias and Tabghah near Capernaum.[6] "The" mountain is important in Matthew's Gospel:

> 8.1 When Jesus had come down from *the mountain*, great crowds followed him...
>
> 14.23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up *the mountain* by himself to pray.
>
> 15.29 After Jesus had left that place, he passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up *the mountain*, where he sat down.
>
> 17.9 As they were coming down *the mountain*, Jesus ordered them, "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."
>
> 28.16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to *the mountain* to which Jesus had directed them.[7]

The significance of the mountain setting of the Beatitudes is mythological, not geographical.[8] In the Old Testament, the mountains are connected with power,[9] and it is from there that theophanies are received,[10] for the mountain tops are nearer the heavenly dwelling-place of the gods.[11] The mountains were created first[12] and will endure forever.[13] The mountains of Moriah, Horeb (Sinai), Zion, and Carmel play an important part in the history of Israel. According to Ezekiel 28.13-16, even Eden was a mountain. When Jesus is said to ascend *the mountain* he is placed in a setting befitting the weight of

[6] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 422.

[7] NRSV.

[8] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 422; Luz, p. 224: "It does not have a fixed meaning."

[9] *cf.* Psalm 97.5; Jeremiah 51.25; Daniel 2.45; Zechariah 4.7

[10] *cf.* Genesis 22.14; Exodus 3.1, 4.27, 18.5; Deuteronomy 4.11, 5.4, 9.15; I Kings 19.11-14

[11] *cf.* Genesis 28 10-22; Isaiah 14.13; of particular significance is I Kings 20.23-28: "The servants of the king of Aram said to him, 'Their gods [*i.e.*, of the Israelites] are gods of the hills, so they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we will be stonger than they...' ".

[12] *cf.* Proverbs 8.25; Job 15.7

[13] *cf.* Genesis 49.26; Psalm 125.1; Habakkuk 3.6

his teaching.[14] However, the traditional connection with Moses receiving the Law on the mountain does not necessarily make Jesus merely a "Second Moses", since:

> Jesus is, among other things, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lord – titles to which Moses could make no claim. It would be thus a grave injustice to think of him who utters the great sermon as simply a new Moses. Jesus is much more.[15]

The genitive absolute participle, καθίσαντος, is used rather than the more classical concordant participle.[16] The redundant pronoun αὐτοῦ and participle λέγων are likely Semitisms.[17] The verb, προσῆλθον occurs fifty-two times in Matthew, six in Mark, ten in Luke, and only once in John.[18] The mention of his disciples, οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, comes as a surprise. It is unclear if this is to be taken as a reference to the Twelve, since to this point in the Gospel, only Peter, Andrew, James, and John have been called (Matthew 4.18-22).[19] Only at the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (7.28 - 8.1) will it it be obvious that Jesus has gone up the mountain in order to teach the crowds, rather than to escape from them.[20] In Luke, Jesus "lifts up his eyes;" here, Jesus "opens his mouth." Both are formal introductory clauses used to increase the solemnity of the

---

[14] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 423.

[15] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 423.

[16] Zerwick, pp. xi, 9. (The genitive absolute is normally used when the subject does not appear in the main clause, otherwise a concordant participle is used.)

[17] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 424; Zerwick, p. 9; *cf.* Davies and Allison, p. 425.

[18] Allen, p. 38.

[19] Allen, p. 39.

[20] Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*. Hermeneia. Edited by A. Y. Collins. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), p. 224.

moment and emphasise its "biblical" character.[21] The inceptive use of the imperfect is implied by ἐδίδασκεν: he *began* to teach them.[22]

v. 3: The poor in spirit: Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

This verse "has been the centre of interest since New Testament times."[23] These twelve words have given rise to centuries of religious and philosophical thought.

> Although textually undisputed, this statement has its share of problems mainly through the strange expression "the poor in (the) spirit" – if this is its proper English translation.[24]

Μακάριος is equivalent to the Latin *beatus* and in the Bible indicates a condition of happiness or blessedness,[25] generally in the sense of the recipient of divine favour.[26] Thirteen of its fifty uses in the New Testament are in Matthew.[27] In the LXX,

---

[21] Allen, p. 39; Luz, p. 224.

[22] Zerwick, p. 9; Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*. Translated by C. L. Rogers, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), p. 11; J. A.Brooks and C. L. Winbery, *Syntax of New Testament Greek*. (Lanham, Maryland: University of America Press, 1979), p. 95.

[23] Betz, p. 111.

[24] Betz, p. 111. See also Luz, p. 232 for an examination of the various possibilities of translation based on the shades of meaning possible in this verse: Is the poverty real or metaphoric?; Is the dative τῷ a dative of respect or a dative of reference?; Does πνεύματι refer to the human or divine spirit?

[25] Zerwick, p. 9.

[26] Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Edited by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich. Second edition revised by F. W. Denker (Chicagio: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 486 [hereafter BAGD]; *cf.* H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. Ninth edition with revised supplement. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 1071 f.

[27] Davies and Allison, p. 434.

μακάριος is generally used to translate אַשְׁרֵי but never בָּרוּךְ.[28] In the Old Testament, it is always persons (as opposed to things or states of being) who are declared blessed:

> Blessedness is fullness of life and related to such things as a wife, beauty, honor, wisdom, and piety. The OT contains many warnings against purely external judgment, so that the true blessedness is that of trust in God, forgiveness of sins, righteousness even in affliction, and final deliverance.[29]

It is this concept of blessedness, of "the distinctive joy which comes through participation in the divine kingdom,"[30] that μακάριος carries over into the New Testament from the Old.

Two main English words have been used to translate μακάριος: "blessed" (or "blest") and "happy."[31] Either is permissible[32] but the vast majority of translations favour the former. "Happy," with its superficial connotations, is not a strong enough word to overcome the weight of centuries of use of the word "blessed," nor is it likely

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[28] Allen, p. 39; nor is אשרי ever used of God. *cf.* Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 431. In the Hebrew Old Testament, אשרי is found 45 times; 26 of these occurrences are in the Psalms. When the simple אשרי is used in a Hebrew beatitude, it is always in the first position, with the person or group of persons declared blessed following. (Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 3 vols. Translated by M. E. Biddle. [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997], vol. 1, p. 196).

[29] G. Bertram, "Makários – The LXX and Judaism" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Abridged in one volume. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 548.

[30] F. Hauck, "Makários – The Word Group in the NT" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. Abridged in one volume. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 548.

[31] Another suggestion, put forward by K. C. Hanson is "honourable." He argues that μακάριος and οὐαι ("horrible") be respectively translated "how honourable" and "how shameful" in that these two words "... are part of the world-field and value system of honor and shame, the foundational Mediterranean values; they exemplify the agnostic nature of Mediterranean culture." (K. C. Hanson, "How Honourable! How Shameful!: A Cultural Analysis of Matthew's Makarisms and Reproaches." *Semeia* 68 [1994], p. 81).

Hanson claims that as this distinction has not been generally recognised by Bible translators, English versions of the Bible "obscure the linguistic, and therefore the cultural and theological, distinctions between blessings and makarisms" (p. 81). His solution, to translate μακάριος as "how honourable" may reflect careful attention to cultural and lingusitic study but is not particularly satisfying.

[32] *cf.*BADG, pp. 486*f.*

that any other word could satisfactorily replace the traditional "blessed" because of its long history of use.[33]

Πτωχός is derived from πτώσσω – to cringe like a beggar.[34] The πτωχός must depend on others for support by begging (as opposed to the πένης who must work[35]) and this dependence extends beyond the economic to the spiritual realm to mean disillusioned and oppressed persons who are in special need of divine assistance.[36] In the LXX πτωχός translates עָנִי 38 times. The עָנִי is not just materially poor, but oppressed by the rich and the powerful.[37] God will not forget the poor (Psalm 9.13) but will deliver them (Psalm 34.10), and have compassion on them (Isaiah 49.13).

> On these lines πτωχοὶ here will mean those who, because they endeavour to lead pious lives of obedience to God, are "poor," *i.e.*, oppressed and downtrodden by ungodly people. They are "poor" as needing God's help.[38]

While possible in Greek, οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι needs to be understood in light of the corresponding Hebrew notion.[39] The phrase, עניי רוח is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls: 1QM 14.7 (Among the poor in spirit [there is power] over the hard of heart[40]) and 1QH 14.3.[41] The addition of "in spirit" is probably redactional but likely does not alter the meaning of the unqualified "poor" found in Luke 6.20, where the rich

---

[33] This is an example of intertextuality, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

[34] Zerwick, p. 9; *cf.* BADG, p. 728.

[35] Luz, p. 231.

[36] BAGD, p. 728.

[37] Allen, p. 39.

[38] Allen, p. 39.

[39] Betz, p. 112.

[40] Translated by G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 120.

[41] Rienecker, p. 12; *cf.* references to "the poor": 1QM 11.9; 1QH 5.22.

seem to have little use for God and the poor are shown in a state of dependence. Rich and poor cannot be simply economic terms.[42]

> The editor of the First Gospel probably felt quite rightly that the simple πτωχοὶ would be misinterpreted by Greek readers unacquainted with Semitic idiom. It compressed a complicated Hebrew train of thought in a Greek word which would be misunderstood if literally interpreted.[43]

Matthew does not juxtapose poverty and wealth as does Luke, nor is poverty by itself a blessing in Matthew.[44] The basic human condition is one of "poverty, desertion, and misery. The message is that becoming aware of this condition is essential for one's understanding of life in general...".[45] Thus, this beatitude is not merely describing a way of life of patience or long-suffering, but is a profound insight into human nature, commending conduct that is humbly lived in God's mercy and grace.[46]

The present tense, ἐστιν, is used of the blessing received: the kingdom of (the) heaven(s), indicating that the kingdom is both a future eschatological event and a present experience. It is unlikely, however, that any verb would have appeared in the Semitic original, so it is wise not to make too much of this.[47]

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[42] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 444.

[43] Allen, p. 39. *cf.* Frank Zimmerman, *The Aramaic Origin of the Four Gospels.* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1979), p. 62.: "It is striking, however, that the origin of 'poor in spirit' is an Aramaic locution מכיכי רוחא; the translator, rendering too literally, did not catch its true gist. *Makkike ruha* can mean literally 'poor in spirit.' It really signifies those who are without hope, dispirited – *depressed in spirit* would serve as a good translation. *Mekak*, and its by-form *muk*, means literally 'poor' but also 'humble, cast down, *downcast*'...".

[44] Betz, pp. 113, 114.

[45] Betz, p. 115

[46] Betz, pp. 115, 116.

[47] Allen, p. 40. *cf.* Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts.* 3rd edition. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 156: "That our Lord's Beatitudes were originally cast in poetic form, in Hebrew or Aramaic, is obvious from the parallelism of lines and clauses still discernible in both Matthew and Luke."

The coming kingdom "of (the) heaven(s)," is an expression that occurs 32 times in the First Gospel, whereas "kingdom of God" is found only five times. These terms are to be taken as equivalent. In Mark, "kingdom of God" is found 14 times, and in Luke 32 times. Neither Mark nor Luke contain the phrase "kingdom of heaven."

While the kingdom is of *the heavens* (τῶν οὐρανῶν), there is no need to suppose that this "expresses a worldview involving multiple heavens"[48] but is more simply explained by reference to the Hebrew and Aramaic words for heaven, שָׁמַיִם and שְׁמַיִן, both of which are duals. In Matthew, "heaven" (5 times) is used to refer to the natural sky; "heavens" (35 times) means the dwelling-place of God.[49]

v. 4: The Mourners: μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται

Πενθοῦντες is derived from πενθέω, to be sad, to grieve or mourn the dead, but this also includes grieving over wrong-doing.[50] This is overt lamentation that cannot be hidden, so strongly has grief taken hold of the one who mourns.[51] If the first beatitude describes poverty (of spirit) as the basic human condition, then grief is the typical response.[52]

"Mourning" can also be interpreted in a metaphorical way: in the Old Testament, mourning is the response of the faithful to the fallen condition of Israel. It is the sin of Israel that holds back the coming of God's promised reign.[53]

The "theological passive," παρακληθήσονται (they shall be comforted) is employed. It is God himself who will be the source of consolation, the Paraclete; it is

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[48] *contra* Betz, p. 119.

[49] Zerwick, p. 9.

[50] BAGD, p. 642.

[51] Rienecker, p. 12.

[52] Betz, p. 120.

[53] Betz, p. 121; Allen, p. 41; *cf.* Isaiah 61.2.

God who will ultimately "wipe every tear from their eyes."[54] Obviously, then, this is a verse that must be understood as an indicative, not an imperative: God's people are not commanded to mourn that they might receive comfort, but future comfort is promised to those who really suffer the pangs of sorrow, both the sadness of loss and the grief caused by sin. But with the promise of eschatological comfort, the question remains, how is it that the people of God can mourn at all?[55]

> Why do the people of God mourn? The clue is to be found – this against most of the church Fathers – not in the fact that they are guilty sinners.... God's own are on the bottom, the wicked on the top. So mourning is heard because the righteous suffer, and because God has not yet acted to reverse the situation.... The righteous therefore cannot but mourn. Until the eschatological reversal takes place, it is not possible to be content with the status quo. To those who understand the truth about the present aeon, grief cannot be eliminated: "This world is to them a strife and a labour with much trouble" (2 Bar. 15.8).[56]

v. 5: The Meek: μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

"The third beatitude... is spoken into a world in which meekness was highly desired but little practiced."[57] This beatitude is based on Psalm 37.11: "But the humble will possess the land[58] and enjoy untold prosperity."[59] "Meekness" (πραΰς) is found only four times in the New Testament, three in Matthew (5.5; 11.29; 21.5) and at I Peter 3.4. Some commentators hold that "meekness" is an essentially Greek concept – a virtue or ethical attitude to be acquired – and that this beatitude needs to be interpreted in the

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[54] Zerwick, p. 9; Revelation 7.17; 21.4. Simeon (Luke 2.25) is looking for the *consolation* of Israel (παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ).

[55] Betz, 123.

[56] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 448.

[57] Betz, p. 124.

[58] MT = ארץ; LXX (Ps 36.11) = γη; Vg = *terra*.

[59] REB

light of the Hellenistic world in general.[60] However, the meaning of this beatitude is so nearly the same as the first one (v. 3) that "no real difference in meaning between the two is to be discerned."[61] The meek are not actively seeking an ethical attitude, but are truly in a condition of powerlessness in this world.[62] The inheritance of τὴν γῆν is an eschatological, not a nationalistic, promise no more immediately concrete than the promise of the kingdom (v. 3) or of comfort in a harsh world (v. 4); thus the meek are to inherit "the earth," not just "the land" – *i.e.*, the land of Israel.[63]

v. 6: Seekers after Righteousness: μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

This beatitude appears to be a longer version of the saying in Luke 6.21a: "Blessed are you who now go hungry; you will be satisfied."[64] Both versions may have roots in Isaiah 55.1: "Come for water, you who are thirsty; though you have no money, come, buy grain and eat; come, buy wine and milk, not for money, not for a price" and Psalm 107.9: "[The LORD] has satisfied the thirsty and filled the hungry with good things."[65] While physical hunger and thirst in themselves have no ethical content, hunger and thirst for righteousness can also be an equally painful experience.[66] Righteousness in this context is achieved by human efforts; it is not the imputed righteousness of grace.

> Righteousness cannot, in this verse, have anything to do with divine vindication, nor can it mean justification or be God's gift. It is, rather,

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[60] Betz, p. 126. In Numbers 12.3 (LXX), Moses is said to be "very meek" – και ὁ ἄνθρωπος Μωυσης πραυς σφοδρα....

[61] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 449.

[62] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 449.

[63] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 450

[64] REB; the verb is also from χορτάζω.

[65] REB; *cf.* Allen, p. 41.

[66] Betz, p. 129.

> something disciples have, and they are persecuted because of it. Hence it is recognizable behaviour of some sort.[67]

"Hungering and thirsting for righteousness" is an active seeking for and participation in justice, a striving for conformity to the will of God that is as regular and insistent as the need for food and drink. It is a desire that, in this life, will never be entirely satisfied: the promised satisfaction, like the promised blessings of all the beatitudes, is rooted in eschatological hope.[68] This interpretation agrees more closely with the traditional Catholic understanding, than with that of orthodox Protestant interpreters such as Melanchthon, Calov, and Bengel, who interpreted the righteousness to be imputed, and the hunger and thirst to be for grace.[69]

The verb, χορτασθήσονται is another use of the theological passive. When referring to humans, χορτάζω (used 16 times in the New Testament) means to be full or satisfied, but when it refers to animals (its primary use) it means to be gorged.[70] The cognate noun, χόρτος, means grass or hay – animal fodder. No wonder W. C. Allen describes this as a "coarse word"![71] The promise of this beatitude is that those who have striven for righteousness – justice – will be stuffed full of it in the kingdom of heaven.

v. 7: The Merciful: μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

This beatitude is not found in the parallel Lukan material.[72] In Matthew 9.13 and 12.7 Jesus quotes Hosea 6.6, a text that calls for mercy to take priority even over the cultic requirements of sacrifice. In this, Jesus is in line with the interpretation of mercy

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[67] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 453.

[68] Allen, p. 41; Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 451.

[69] Luz, p. 237.

[70] BAGD, pp. 883 f.

[71] Allen, p. 41.

[72] *Cf.* Luke 10.37. There are several references to God's mercy in Luke (*e.g.*, 1.50, 54, 58, 72, 78, *etc.*).

in the rabbinic tradition,[73] for in Judaism, "the exercise of mercy was one of the preeminent religious and social duties."[74] The interpretation of the early church[75] – that divine "prevenient" mercy is not supposed here, but that it is human compassion that is called for – still finds favour with some commentators.[76] As in the other beatitudes, the hope is eschatological and the divine passive is employed. The Greek ἔλεος refers to mercy within the context of a relationship just as the Hebrew חֶסֶד stands for covenant loyalty. In both, merciful action is the concrete expression of loyalty to God. Mere talk or intellectual knowledge about mercy does not suffice; mercy must be active.[77]

v. 8: The Pure in Heart: μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

This beatitude has become the core of all Christian asceticism and mysticism.[78] Purity of heart, the seat of human thought and will,[79] is the path to perfection by which the true image of God will shine through a person.

The meaning of "purity of heart" must have been obvious to Matthew's first readers, as this phrase, which is without parallel in the rest of the New Testament, is never explained.[80] Within the Jewish matrix, Psalm 24.3-5 provides a prime example of

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[73] Luz, p. 238, n. 88.

[74] Betz, p. 133.

[75] I Clement 13.2; Polycarp, Philippians 2.3; Didache 3.7-8

[76] Luz p. 238; Betz, p. 134; Allen, p. 41; Davies and Allison, vol. I, pp. 454 f.

[77] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 455; Betz, p. 134. NB. In the REB חסד is translated "loyalty" at Micah 6.8.

[78] Luz, p. 239.

[79] Zerwick, p. 10; *cf.* Hebrew לבב.

[80] Betz, p. 134.

the importance of "purity of heart,"[81] while Psalm 51.10 is a prayer for the restoration of that purity in the midst of grievous sin. Purity of heart, which is internal, is distinct from external, cultic or ritual purity:

> ... by the time of early Christianity all antiquity had concluded that a person's inner disposition was a matter of the greatest significance, ritual or no ritual, so that the concept of purity of the heart or soul acceded to the status of a virtue.[82]

Purity of heart means inner disposition rather than external appearances, invisible piety rather than ostentatious shows of religion, honest simplicity rather than hypocrisy.[83] It is this inner disposition that is "poor in spirit," knowing its need of God; that mourns the sin and pain in the world; and which strives for righteousness and mercy with the same hunger as for food and drink. Purity of heart does not necessitate an escape from the world but a venture into it:

> One should strive not into the height but into the depth, Luther says, as God himself has done; and one should "seek God in the miserable, erring and laboring ones"; "that's where one sees God, there the heart becomes pure, there arrogance lies down." Purity of heart means that each in his or her place in the world "thinks what God says and puts God's thought in the place of his or her own thoughts."[84]

The roots of the idea of "seeing God" are probably more Greek than Hebraic: the God of the Jews was invisible, but at the centre of both Plato's and Aristotle's thought is

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[81] Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully. They will receive blessing from the LORD, and vindication from the God of their salvation (NRSV).

[82] Betz, p. 134.

[83] Betz, p. 136; *cf.* Bonhoeffer, pp. 125 f.: "Purity of heart is here contrasted with all outward purity, even the purity of high intention. The pure heart is pure alike of good and evil, it belongs exclusively to Christ and looks only to him.... They shall see God, whose hearts have become a reflection of the image of Jesus Christ."

[84] Betz, p. 240.

the concept that true being is to see God.[85] Indeed, "seeing God" is very rare in the Old Testament, with only a hanful of references to be found.[86] It is unlikely that this beatitude makes "a connection between purity of the heart and the improvement of the physical and mental functioning of the eye" [!].[87] Nor is the "beatific vision" of later medieval theology to be found here.[88] One interesting interpretation, based on translating the Greek text into Aramaic, repointing it, and then translating it back into Greek, has suggested the correction, "Happy are those who are pure in heart for they will be seen by God."[89]

v. 9: The Peacemakers: μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

This verse has possible political implications: Εἰρηνοποιός[90] is a term not found in the LXX, and a *hapax* in the New Testament but is a term used in secular literature for exalted rulers. In this there is a possible veiled polemic against the Roman court. The deeds of everyday life are rewarded with the highest of imperial titles. The smallest deeds of love and mercy are given equal status with the mighty deeds of an

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[85] Luz, p. 240; *cf.* Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa* II, states that idol worshippers are blind in soul and body, but that the true worshipper has sight of the soul, which may not see the sun itself, visible to the eyes of the flesh, yet obtain the vision of God through their earnest devotion. Similarly, in *Legum Allegoriae* I he says that incorporeal things are invisible to the eye but perceptible by the intellect.

[86] Genesis 32.30; Job 19.26-27, Psalm 42.2, Isaiah 6.5; Isaiah 60.2. Zimmerman, p. 68, points out that while the MT of Exodus 24.10-11 indicates that the elders of Israel saw God, the LXX edits this to say that the place where God stood was seen, not God himself.

[87] Betz, p. 137.

[88] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 457.

[89] Zimmerman, pp. 68 f. He suggests that the misunderstanding stems from a confusion of an Aramaic *pe'il* with the dative of agent. While this theory has a certain philological interest, it does not help to come to terms with the Greek text as it stands.

[90] Usually translated "peacemakers" but perhaps "peace-mongers" (as opposed to war-mongers) would give it a more active sense. However, as noted above, the New Testament word for peace, εἰρηνη is closely related to the Hebrew שלום, and has much broader implications that the mere absence of strife.

Alexander or an Augustus.[91] Given the admonition to love the enemy later on in the Sermon in the Mount (5.44-48), the making of peace is to extend beyond the boundaries of the faith community to the community at large. Matthew's readers are not called to be just pacifists, but active agents for peace; this peace is not merely the absence of strife but the presence of true שָׁלוֹם, the fulness and wholeness of the life of God's people under the Gospel.[92] This verse has political implications, but it does not necessarily have a political agenda, such as working for peace between warring factions:

> For such activities, the SM [Sermon on the Mount] does not claim to have authority or power. Therefore, the SM cannot be used as a general guide for political behavior. Rather, the SM simply educates the disciples so that they develop attitudes appropriate for the teaching of Jesus; in this process, concrete political situations are not given consideration.[93]

The admonition to make peace[94] and the hope of divine sonship (υἱοὶ θεου)[95], are both Old Testament concepts, but only here are these two linked in an eschatological promise. In Semitic thought the name reveals something of the nature, so to be called something by God (the use of the divine passive, κληθήσονται, again indicates that the reward, in this case, the naming, is God's doing) is to be that something.[96]

v. 10: The Persecuted: μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

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[91] Betz, pp. 137 f. The description of peacemakers applies also to the Essenes, who are said to "dispense their anger after a just manner, and restrain their passion. They are eminent for fidelity, and are the ministers of peace...". Josephus, *Wars* II.8.6, in *The Works of Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston. New updated edition. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), pp. 605 f.

[92] Luz, p. 241; Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 457.

[93] Betz, p. 139.

[94] *eg.*, Psalm 34.14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace [שלום], and pursue it (NRSV).

[95] *cf.* Deuteronomy 14.1; *Aboth* 3.18.

[96] Zerwick, p. 10 Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 458; Betz, p. 140.

The perfect passive participle, δεδιωγμένοι[97] indicates that present persecution is the result of past action. The rendering, "Those who bear the wounds of persecution" has been suggested as a dynamic translation.[98] It is possible that this beatitude is a redactional construction,[99] as the promise – the kingdom of heaven[100] – forms an *inclusio* with the first beatitude and the reason for the persecution – righteousness – harks back to the fourth beatitude. Furthermore, the first four beatitudes are concerned with the pursuit of righteousness, and the last four call for endurance because of the hardships the search for righteousness will bring.[101] Active righteousness that is the cause of active persecution must be discernible behaviour of some sort, not the imputed righteousness of grace or a mere longing for divine justice. Persecution for the sake of the kingdom ultimately gives way to citizenship in the kingdom.[102] The promise of the kingdom gives eschatological hope to the Christian community, whose present situation is one of weakness. The beatitudes come in the midst of oppression, and

> ... all of the virtues of vss. 3-10 are testimonies to human strength, rather than weakness. All of this is said to a community that at present lives under distress, harassment, and persecution.[103]

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[97] Both physical and verbal abuse is indicated by the verb, διωκω. Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 459; *cf.* BAGD, p. 201; *cf.* Luz, pp. 214 f.: the perfect participle adds "universal dimension" to the event.

[98] Zerwick, p. 10.

[99] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 459. As a redactional construction created by Matthew for literary purposes, it is unlikely for this verse that a Semitic original stands behind the present Greek text.

[100] Allen, p. 42: "It is clear that this phrase [the kingdom of heaven] contains in itself all the blessings promised in the six intermediate clauses."

[101] Betz, p. 142; Luz, p. 241.

[102] Luz, p. 241; Allen, p. 42; Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 460: righteousness here is obedient conduct, not justification or vindication; it is God's demand rather than God's gift.

[103] Betz, p. 146.

The persecution of the righteous – or persecution for righteousness' sake – is a theme to be found in the Fourth Servant Song of Isaiah 52.13-53.12; Wisdom 2.12-20 ("Let us lie in wait for the righteous man because he is inconvenient to us" [NRSV]); and even in Plato:

> [Those who praise injustice as preferable to justice] will say that the just man ... will be whipped, stretched on the rack, imprisoned, have his eyes burnt out, and, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled and realize that one should not want to be just but to appear so.[104]

vv. 11 - 12: The Reviled: μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ. 12 χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

Verse 11 is an "overloaded" sentence that can be broken down thus:[105]

Blessed are you
when they[106] insult you
and they persecute [you][107]
and they say all sorts of evil things about you
[falsely]
on account of me.

The blessing is qualified two ways. First, "falsely"[108] acknowledges the temptation to dismiss all criticism as "persecution." The persecution must be true persecution, for right-doing, and not for wrong-doing. It is as Plato's just man, who, while appearing to be unjust because he makes no outer show of his goodness suffers the rightful fate of the unjust man who succeeds in hiding his wickedness behind a veil of

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[104] Translated by G. M. A. Grube in *Plato's Republic*. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1974), 361e-362d; p. 33.

[105] Betz, p. 147.

[106] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 461: there is no subject specified in the Greek.

[107] Here, Matthew uses διωκω, but in the Lukan parallel (6.22), the term is ἀφοριζω, a much more specific word meaning to separate, exclude or excommunicate (BAGD, p. 127).

[108] For textual exidence regarding the inclusion or exclusion of this word, see above, p. 12.

seeming goodness and thereby escapes punishment.[109] Second, "on account of me" shows that the proper cause of persecution is Jesus.' The phrase, ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης in verse 10 must be synonymous with ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ in verse 11. The disciples will be persecuted because of their Master; and they must never be persecuted because of themselves. "Associating with Jesus must not be a mere pretense and cover-up for impious behavior."[110]

This last beatitude is much longer than the others and is also addressed directly to the hearers in second person plural (ἐστε). As will be discussed in the next chapter, this is likely the result of literary convention.[111] Recently, a Dead Sea Scrolls fragment containing beatitudes similar to the ones in the Sermon on the Mount was published. Noting the similarity of construction with the Matthean text, B. T. Viviano writes:

> That both the Dead Sea Scroll beatitudes and the Gospel beatitudes share a structural norm ... is indicated by the fact that in each case the last beatitude is a much longer one. In Luke there are three short beatitudes and then a fourth longer one; in Matthew there are eight beatitudes and one longer one. In this Dead Sea Scroll fragment, we do not know how many there were in the original because not all of them have survived, but we do know that they end with four short ones and a longer one. In each case the last beatitude breaks the patterns of couplets.[112]

Three verbs are used to describe the maltreatment that will be received on account of Jesus' name. The first, ὀνειδίζω, can have a variety of meanings: reproach, revile or insult.[113] The second is διώκω, which has already appeared in two previous verses. The third is simply λέγω (πονηρόν). Matthew's phrase is much more general

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[109] See above, p. 1.17, n. 108.

[110] Betz, p. 148; *cf.* I Peter 4.15-16.

[111] See below, p. 39.

[112] Benedict T. Viviano, "Beatitudes found among Dead Sea Scrolls," *Biblical Archaeology Review*. (November/December, 1992), p. 66.

[113] BAGD, p. 570.

than Luke's Semitic idiom, ἐκβάλλω τὸ ὄνομα (6.22).[114] Included in this last phrase is the preposition κατά, which, with the genitive means "against" and is an indication of hostility.[115]

Verse 12 contains the promise of a "reward" – μισθός – which, as in the rest of the Beatitudes, (and indeed, in the rest of Matthew) is eschatological.[116] It is not a reward of grace but of divine justice.[117] This is in line with the Jewish tradition, in which holiness will be rewarded (Wisdom 2.22), and the just will live forever and receive their reward (μισθός) from the Lord (Wisdom 5.15; II Esdras 7.35), but one is not to look for a reward (*Aboth* 1.3). The promised reward is in the future, and,

> ...although the kingdom in its fullness has not arrived, thought of its future blessings transforms the present and makes suffering bearable.[118]

The only imperatives in the Beatitudes are in the last verse: χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε – rejoice and be glad.

The beatitudes are both demand and promise. They call for a faith that is not only religiously inward, but also active in the world. The promised reward is that which matters most, namely God's approval, which is variously expressed as the kingdom of heaven, divine sonship, or reward in heaven. An almost apocalyptic encouragement is offered: by their sufferings and rejection, the faithful will know that they will receive blessings from God, for so were the prophets before them persecuted and slandered. Martyrdom becomes the final proof of the true prophetic (or apostolic) calling.[119]

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[114] Black, p. 135.

[115] Zerwick, p. 10.

[116] Luz, pp. 242, 245; *cf.* Allen, p. 42. the promised reward is not for piety but is a compensation for present suffering.

[117] Betz, p. 152.

[118] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 463.

[119] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 465.

A brief note on interpretation

The Beatitudes have been interpreted in three principal ways.[120] The first sees them as setting forth conditions necessary for the reception of grace – that righteousness is given by God to those who fit these descriptions of poverty, meekness, *etc*. The second interpretation sees the Beatitudes as ethical demands representing ascending steps of greater and greater morality: grace is given to those who follow these precepts. A third possibility is that they represent norms for the Christian community as it attempts to live the life that comes from grace.[121] The Roman Catholic Church interprets them in this way:

> The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples...[122]

However, the promise of divine grace is still connected to human morality:

> The Beatitudes confront us with decisive choices concerning earthly goods; they purify our hearts in order to teach us to love God above all things.[123]

In this traditional Roman Catholic understanding, the Beatitudes are seen as part of the "New Law" of Christ, and specifically as part of the "evangelical counsels," which are not expected to be kept by all persons at all times, but are intended to foster the

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[120] , In his book, *Jesus: The Man, the Mission, and the Message* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963 [pp. 259 - 263]) C. Milo Connick catalogues no fewer than *twelve* possible modes of interpretation.

[121] Luz, pp. 229 f.

[122] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Ottawa: Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992), para. 1717, p. 368.

[123] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 1728, p. 370.

holiness of the Church through the exercise of charity.[124] Protestantism has been reluctant to equate the Beatitudes with "Law." Martin Luther reacted strongly to the Roman Catholic teaching of his day in his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount:

> ... [T]his fifth chapter [of Matthew's Gospel] has fallen into the hands of the vulgar pigs and asses, the jurists and the sophists, the right hand of that jackass of a pope and his mamelukes. Out of this beautiful rose they have sucked and broadcast poison, covering up Christ with it and elevating the Antichrist. According to them, Christ does not intend everything He teaches in the fifth chapter to be regarded by His Christians as a command for them to observe; but He gave much of it merely as advice to those who want to become perfect, to be kept by anyone who pleases. ... On this basis they have thought up the twelve "evangelical counsels," twelve bits of good advice in the Gospel, which may be kept by anyone who pleases if he wants to attain a perfection higher than that of other Christians. Thus they have not only made perfection as well as Christian salvation dependent upon works apart from faith, but they have even made these works optional. I call that forbidding true and fine good works, which is just what these vulgar asses and blasphemers accuse us of doing.[125]

Luther allows for an ethical interpretation, but only if the the ethics are based on Gospel, not on Law.[126] This ethical, but non-legalistic interpretation is echoed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

> ... Jesus calls his disciples blessed. ... He spoke to men who had already responded to the power of his call, and it is that call which has made them poor, afflicted and hungry. He calls them blessed, not because of their privation, or the renunciation they have made, for these are not blessed in themselves. Only the call and the promise, for the sake of which they are ready to suffer poverty and renunciation, can justify the beatitudes.[127]

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[124] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paras. 1973 *et passim*, pp. 410–411.

[125] Martin Luther, *The Sermon on the Mount* in *Luther's Works*, vol. 21. Translated by Jaroslav Pelikan. (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1956), pp. 3 f.

[126] Betz, p. 230.

[127] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*. Translated from the German by R. H. Fuller, revised by Irmgard Booth. (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 118.

The Beatitudes are not *requirements*, but *declarations of blessing* rooted in grace. "The hard commands of Mt 5-7 presuppose God's mercy and prior saving activity."[128] The Beatitudes are concerned with grace, eschatological comfort, and christology, in that Jesus' own life illustrates the Beatitudes. By bringing comfort to, rather than laying commands on, his "heavy-laden" disciples, Jesus gives his followers a practical theodicy. Without explaining the reason for pain and evil, suffering is alleviated through eschatological promises that reveal that present misery will give way to the vision of hope that is founded in the future fulfilment of the promise of God.[129]

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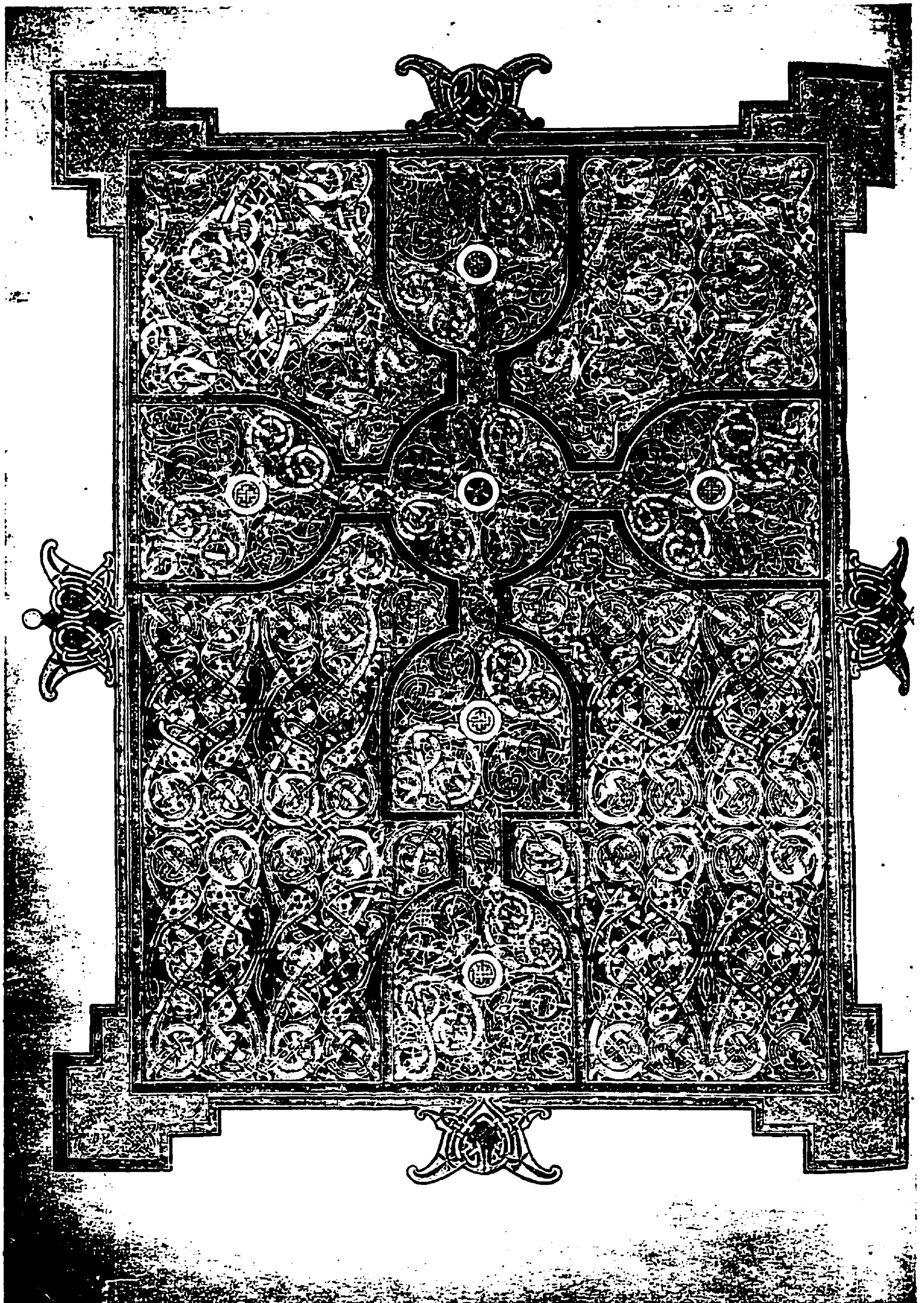
[128] Davies and Allison, vol. I, p. 466.

[129] *cf.* Davies and Allison, pp. 466 f.



Chapter 2: The Beatitudes in Context

A brief introduction to Matthew's Gospel

Ascription of authorship of the Gospel to St Matthew, the tax-collector-turned apostle (Matthew 9.9) was accepted almost without question in the early church. Eusebius, quoting Papias, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (III.39.16) states:

> So then, Matthew compiled the oracles in the Hebrew language, but everyone interpreted them as he was able.

Augustine, in *On the Agreement of the Evangelists* (I.2.4) maintains that Mark is an abridgement of Matthew, a view that has been held by few scholars in the last 75 years.[1] In the lists of the Gospels and in many early manuscripts, Matthew is often placed first, indicating the assumption of its priority. The order of the Gospels in the Clermont list (Egypt, c. 300 CE) is Matthew - John - Mark - Luke; the Cheltenham list (North Africa, c. 360 CE): Matthew - Mark - John - Luke; Codex Bezae (D, 5th century CE): Matthew - John - Luke - Mark.[2] However, this order favoured by the later fathers does not rest entirely upon early tradition, but was, in may ways, "the rationalization of a *fait accompli.*"[3]

What may be said with certainty is that the author of Matthew's Gospel was a conservative Jewish Christian, well versed in Jewish legal traditions and messianic expectations.[4] For over one hundred years scholarly opinion has favoured an author of

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[1] *e.g.*, W. F. Farmer, B. C. Butler, W. F. Albright, C. S. Mann.

[2] F. C. Grant, "Gospel of Matthew" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible.* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), vol. 3, p. 303.

[3] Grant, *IDB*, vol. 3, pp. 303-304.

[4] W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew.* Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), pp. clxxxiii *f.*

Jewish background (29 major studies) over a Gentile Christian (11) or even the apostle Matthew himself (6).[5]

But what of the possibility of apostolic authorship? This theory was virtually rendered untenable in the 1920s when B. H. Streeter codified earlier research into the "Synoptic Problem" and drew conclusions which are still regarded as authoritative by the vast majority of scholars today.[6] By carefully analyzing the arrangement of material in the Synoptic Gospels, and incidences of agreement and disagreement among them, Streeter developed the "Four-Source Theory," *i.e.*, that while the authors of Matthew and Luke each had their own distinctive sources for their Gospels (abbreviated as M and L) which accounts for their unique material, they apparently had two other sources in common: Mark's Gospel, which served as a framework into which other material was inserted in sections (Luke) or by thematic similarity (Matthew), and "Q," perhaps shorthand for the German word *Quelle*, meaning "source," a conjectured Aramaic collection of sayings and other non-narrative material (including the Beatitudes) which was utilized by Matthew and Luke in different ways and for different purposes.

Streeter's proposed literary solution to the "Synoptic Problem" has been challenged by Albright and Mann as recently as 1971 on historical grounds: they maintain that the conditions of time and place would not have favoured the acceptance of a document of Roman provenance in Palestine:

> The contention that Mark was a Roman gospel, compiled around the teaching and reminiscences of Peter, has almost everything to commend it, and is nowadays generally accepted. But to proceed from there to argue that Mark is the basis, not only of the framework of Matthew and Luke, but of considerable quantities of material in both, is to carry a historical hypothesis too far. Under the conditions prevailing in Palestine at the generally accepted date of Mark (c. AD 65), it is hard to imagine that

[5] See the chart in Davies and Allison, vol. 1, pp. 10-11.

[6] B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (New York: MacMillan, 1925).

> Christians in Palestine were waiting for a gospel tradition from Rome in order to begin writing down their own oral tradition.[7]

Certainly, it is difficult to suppose the acceptance of Mark by Jewish Christians under these conditions. Jerusalem, not Rome, was the centre of early Christianity and Mark's Greek gospel is not favourably disposed to the Jewish Law.[8] However, this theory, based on the witness of the church fathers to the priority of Matthew and the anti-Roman "conditions prevailing" in Palestine just prior to the uprising of 66 CE falls down on several points: First, a document such as Mark's Gospel, despite its Roman provenance would not carry Roman, imperial authority, nor would the recollections of Peter be likely to be seen as a "Roman" document at all, unless the Gospel of Mark was originally written in Latin, which is a suggestion no one has ever made. Second, allowing for a very early date for Mark's Gospel (as early as 60 or 65 CE) there is still a gap of fifteen or twenty years – almost an entire generation – between the accepted date of Mark and the generally accepted date of Matthew of c. 80 CE.[9] Much can happen in the span of a generation, including the acceptance of a "Roman" gospel, or the widespread dissemination of a collection of stories that allegedly had their origin with Peter as he awaited execution in Rome. Third, if Mark is a distillation of Matthew, his literary genius has been overshadowed by his bad grammar. Fourth, it would be necessary to assume that Mark summarised Matthew's Gospel without reference to Matthew's theological framework. Fifth, there *was* a Palestinian gospel tradition, if one accepts the hypothetical existence of "Q." Sixth, What Mark has "omitted" is astounding: birth narratives, parables, the Sermon on the Mount / Plain. B. H. Streeter observed many years before:

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[7] Albright and Mann, pp. clxxii-clxxiii.

[8] Davies and Allison, vol 1, p. 140.

[9] Davies and Allison, vol. 1, p. 138: "To sum up: Matthew was almost certainly written between 70 and AD 100, in all probability between 80 and AD 95." *Cf.* pp. 127-128: Matthew has been dated as early as 40-50 CE and as late as the beginning of the second century.

> Now there is nothing antecedently improbable in the idea that for certain purposes an abbreviated version of the Gospel [of Matthew] might be desired; but only a lunatic would leave out Matthew's account of the Infancy, the Sermon on the Mount, and practically all the parables, in order to get room for purely verbal expansion of what was retained.[10]

Matthew's Gospel, despite the "evidence" of Papias, is a Greek book; nor is it likely that the Greek text as it now stands is a translation of a Hebrew or Aramaic original.[11] However, Matthew was almost certainly a Jewish Christian writing for other Jewish Christians.[12] There are at least sixty Old Testament quotations in Matthew, sometimes following the LXX, sometimes following the MT, and sometimes following neither.[13]

In the community for which Matthew was writing, Christianity and Judaism still overlapped and were in constant contact and conflict. A likely place of composition is Syrian Antioch,[14] although where the original manuscript of Matthew was completed will never be known with complete certainty. The other serious possibility is Jerusalem or elsewhere in Palestine, given the witness of the Fathers and Matthew's Jewish characteristics.

> The Patristic evidence that Matthew was written in Palestine in Hebrew is impressive – until we reflect that all the Fathers had read the statement of Irenaeus, ... and that Irenaeus himself had read Papias' dictum on τὰ

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[10] Streeter, p. 158. He later adds (p. 164): "How any one who has worked ... with a Synopsis of the Greek text can retain the slightest doubt of the original and primitive character of Mark I am unable to comprehend. But since there are, from time to time, ingenious persons who rush into print with theories to the contrary, I can only suppose, either that they have not been at pains to do this, or else that – like some of the highly cultivated people who think that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, or that the British are the Lost Ten Tribes – they have eccentric views of what constitutes evidence."

[11] Grant, *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 304.

[12] A. M. Hunter, *Introducing the New Testament.* (London: SCM, 1984), p. 54.

[13] Grant, *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 306.

[14] Grant, *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 312. Ignatius of Antioch (martyred c.110 CE) in his letter to the Ephesians (19) clearly quotes Matthew's infancy narratives as authoritative scripture. See also A. M. Hunter, p. 56; Davies and Allison, vol. 1, pp. 138-148.

> λόγια. Thus the tradition can be traced back to a single root; and, quite apart from our interpretaion of Papias, it cannot be authentic, for our Gospel of Matthew being based on the Greek Mark cannot be a translation from the Aramaic. At the same time the evidence of Irenaeus and Papias has a negative value. It proves that Matthew was not produced either in Rome or in Asia Minor, but was believed to have originally come from the East.[15]

Matthew's anonymity (for nowhere is the author identified in the text, nor does the title, κατα Μαθθαιον form part of the original text) indicates that its origin can be traced to an early church. Many apocryphal writings of the NT era (*e.g.*, the Gospel of Peter, *etc.*) make claims to apostolic authorship to bolster their acceptance. Within the NT itself the same might be said of the ascription of Pauline authorship to the Pastoral Epistles (*et aliis*), or the connection of Peter with the two epistles that bear his name.[16] The quantity of (especially) Gnostic material bearing the names of apostles made the process of defining the NT canon one of exclusion rather than of inclusion of all "apostolic" documents. The anonymity of Matthew's gospel suggests that the document was accepted as authoritative by an authority competent to do so, *i.e.*, an important congregation such as Rome, Antioch or Ephesus; of these three the most likely is Antioch,[17] given its linguistic setting, combination of Greek and Hebraic background, and institutional development.[18]

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[15] Streeter, p. 500.

[16] That is to say, Matthew's Gospel makes no internal claims about its authorship, whereas the Pastoral Epistles and the Petrine writings do. For whatever reason, the author of the First Gospel apparently did not find it necessary to take such an action.

[17] Streeter, pp. 500-503.

[18] Grant, *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 304.

The Setting of the Beatitudes in Matthew's Gospel

Various suggestions have been put forward as to the structure of Matthew's Gospel as a whole: chiastic, tripartite, lectionary, five-fold, no discernible pattern at all.[19] The most prevalent of these is the five-fold or "penteteuchal" theory of B. W. Bacon (following a tradition that dates back to the second century CE[20]) who discerned in Matthew's Gospel a five-fold counterpart to the Five Books of Moses.[21] While opinion is far from unanimous, this perceived structure is accepted by the majority of scholars. Beginning and ending with the Birth and Passion/Resurrection narratives, the basic outline of the book is given thus[22]:

Major Divisions	*Narrative*	*Didactic*	*Theme*
3-7	3-4	5-7	Discipleship
8-10	8.1-9.34	9.35-10.42	Apostleship
11.1-13.52	11-12	13.1-13.52	Hidden Revelation
13.53-18.35	13.53-17.23	17.24-18.35	The Church
19-25	19-22	23-25	Judgement

Each section ends with the same phrase: καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς... (7.28-29; 11.1; 13.53; 19.1; 26.1).

These five divisions are also comparable with the five Megilloth (the readings assigned for the five major Jewish festivals), the five books of the Psalter, the five divisions of Ecclesiasticus, the five divisions of Proverbs, and the five original divisions of *Pirqe Aboth*.[23] This structure has been challenged by many scholars but it withstands

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[19] Davies and Allison, vol 1, pp. 58-62.

[20] W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 14.

[21] *Cf.* Davies and Allison, vol. 1, p. 59.

[22] Grant, *IDB*, vol. 3, p. 304.

[23] Davies, *Setting*, pp. 15-16.

criticism at the literary level.[24] Nonetheless, any attempt to impose this perceived structure too rigidly must be resisted: on closer examination the Mosaic parallel breaks down. Furthermore, if Matthew's intention had been to portray Jesus as a Second Moses by purely literary means, it would doubtless have been more obvious.[25]

The Beatitudes stand at the very beginning of the first didactic section in Matthew's Gospel, but the Beatitudes should not be considered apart from the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, nor the Sermon on the Mount apart from its context in the entire gospel; otherwise one is forced to treat the birth and passion/resurrection narratives as a sort of prologue and epilogue which must certainly undermine the integrity of the Gospel as a whole if these important aspects need to be considered apart from the imposed five-fold structure.[26]

> It is important to note several points about how and where the evangelist has used these makarisms, their redactional placement. Other than the two summary statements (4.17, 23), the "Sermon on the Mount" is the first of Jesus' public teaching in the Gospel; this places particular emphasis on this series of makarisms as the inauguration of Jesus' message. The makarisms are the opening of the sermon and therefore set the tone for the whole.[27]

A brief theological comment may be in order: the Beatitudes summarise the ideal quality of life of the community for which the gospel was composed – the eschatological blessings promised in the Beatitudes are those of the Christian community.[28] The Beatitudes set forth the theological basis for the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. While

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[24] Davies, *Setting*, p. 25

[25] W. D. Davies, *The Sermon on the Mount.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 8-9.

[26] Davies, *Sermon*, p. 11.

[27] K. C. Hanson, "How Honourable! How Shameful!: A Cultural Analysis of Matthew's Makarisms and Reproaches," *Semeia* 68 (1994), p. 100.

[28] Robert A. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding*. (Waco: Word, 1983), pp. 29-30.

the comparison may not be pressed too far, Jesus does ascend *the* mountain (τὸ ὄρος) to deliver the New Law and the New Covenant of greater righteousness just as Moses once ascended another mountain. Matthew shows Jesus to be greater than Moses in that while Moses receives the Law on the mountain, and delivers it to the people of Israel, Jesus himself gives the New Law. There *is* a parallel, but that parallel need not dictate a Mosaic structure on the entire gospel.

Literary Genre and Parallels

Before discussing parallel texts in other literature, an obvious question must be asked: What sort of literature are the Beatitudes? However, the answer to this question is not so obvious.

On the surface, the Beatitudes (from the Latin, *beatitudo*) come under the heading of "makarisms," from the Greek word μακαρισμός. It has been suggested that the root of this word, μάκαρ is not Greek (the corresponding word for such blessings in classical Greek religions is ὄλβιος), but is derived from the Egyptian *m'r*, in which language this type of saying is quite common.[29] Jesus did not invent this literary form – and neither did the author of Matthew's Gospel.

No matter what the source of makarisms – Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek or Latin – they generally share four essential characteristics. 1) Their *Sitz im Leben* is ultimately derived from a cultic setting of worship or instruction; they serve as reminders for the hearers of things that they have heard before. 2) They form declarative statements. 3) Along with a present ethical or moral concern there is also an eschatological orientation.[30] 4) To these three features may be added a fourth, purely lingustic one:

[29] Betz, p. 92.

[30] Betz, p. 93.

makarisms are usually presented in the third person plural, as in Matthew, not in the second person plural as in Luke.[31]

That Matthew follows the usual form of a beatitude or makarism does not necessarily imply that Matthew's version is the more primitive of the two.[32] A survey of the OT material reveals some 45 makarisms, only three of which are cast in the second person plural[33] and one in second person singular.[34] The Greek text of the OT contains 60 makarisms; the three makarisms set in the second person plural in the MT are retained in the Greek translation but the one in second person singular is translated as third person plural. Makarisms in post-biblical Judaism are expressed in the third person, with rare exceptions. In the writings of the Apostolic Fathers some twenty makarisms are to be found; of these, only three of a conditional nature are in the first person. Makarisms are common in other Greek and Latin literature; again, as a rule they are expressed in the third person, occasionally in the second person singular, but apparently not in second person plural.[35]

> Il est parfaitement exact de dire que les béatitudes s'écrivent ordinairement à la troisième personne. Cet argument nous paraît cependant trop général pour jeter un soupçon sur la forme à la deuxième personne utilisée par Luc. Il faudrait pouvoir prouver que cette forme, comme telle, est anormale; ce n'est pas la case. Elle est plus rare, mais régulière; c'est d'ailleurs celle qu'emploie la dernière béatitude. ... Matthieu serait revenu à la forme la plus habituelle.[36]

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[31] Jacques Dupont, *Les Béatitudes. Tome I: Le Problème Littéraire.* (Paris: J Gabalda, 1969), pp. 274-282.

[32] Dupont, vol. I, pp. 274-275.

[33] Deuteronomy 33.29; Psalm 128.2; Ecclesiastes 10.17

[34] Isaiah 32.20; *cf.* Dupont, vol. I, p. 275.

[35] Dupont, vol. I, pp. 276-279.

[36] Dupont, vol. I, pp. 279-280.

The Beatitudes, being common to Matthew and Luke, are derived from "Q" - the hypothetical oral source used by both evangelists, even though they are placed in different settings and are expressed differently.[37] Some of these sayings (beatitudes or makarisms) are also found in the Gospel of Thomas[38]:

> Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven" (54).
>
> Jesus said, "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted. Wherever you have been persecuted they will find no place" (68).
>
> Jesus said, "Blessed are they who have been persecuted within themselves. It is they who have truly come to know the father. Blessed are the hungry, for the belly of him who desires will be filled" (69).[39]

Reference to the Beatitudes may also be found in the Apostolic Fathers: in Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians:

> ... [remember] what the Lord said as he taught: "Do not judge, that you may not be judged; forgive, and you will be forgiven; show mercy, that you may be shown mercy; with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you"; and "blessed are the poor and those persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God" (2.3).[40]

And in the Didache:

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[37] The most obvious parallel to the Matthean beatitudes is to be found within the New Testament itself – the Lucan beatitudes (Luke 6.20-22). For a full discussion of the relationship between the Matthean and Lukan versions, see Allison and Davies, vol I, pp. 431-442.

[38] In the Gospel of Thomas there are in total ten beatitudes (7, 49, 103, 18, 19, 54, 58, 68-69). "Gos. Thom. reflects knowledge of an early (oral?) form of the sermon on the mount / plain, from which three beatitudes ... were drawn and then modified under the influence of another tradition." Allison and Davies, vol. I, p. 441.

[39] J. M. Robinson (ed.), *The Nag Hammadi Library*. Third ed. rev. (San Farncisco: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 132, 134.

[40] J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (trans.), *The Apostolic Fathers*. Second edition, ed. and rev. by M. W. Holmes. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), p. 124.

> My child ... [d]o not be arrogant or evil-minded, for all these things breed blasphemies. [¶] Instead, be humble, for, "the humble shall inherit the earth" (3.6-7)[41]

And in the later writings of the NT:

> Yet if you should suffer for doing right you may count yourselves happy (I Peter 3.14, REB).
>
> If you are reviled for being Christians, count yourselves happy, because the Spirit of God in all his glory rests upon you (I Peter 4.14, REB).

Recently, beatitudes remarkably similar to those in the Sermon on the Mount, have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls literature. It has been suggested that the text discovered in this fragmented document (4Q525) proves that Matthew's form of the Beatitudes, not Luke's shorter text, is the more original of the two versions, because its construction (eight short makarisms plus one longer one) corresponds to the standard literary form of the day.[42]

In their present canonical context the Beatitudes fall within the literary genre of makarisms, but the question remains as to what sort of literature they were *before* they were redacted into their present setting in Matthew's Gospel. It is assumed that while the Beatitudes may reflect genuine sayings of Jesus,[43] their present form within both Matthew and Luke is the result of redactional activity. In that case, how are the Beatitudes to be treated as individual, isolated makarisms? If the "Sermon on the Mount" is the result of a redactor's work, then what is the origin of the Beatitudes? The answer is likely to be found within the Jewish matrix of the NT, particularly in rabbinic methods of instruction. The individual makarisms that comprise the Beatitudes belong to

[41] Lightfoot and Harmer, p. 151.

[42] Emile Puech, "4Q525..." *Revue biblique* 138 (1991), pp. 80-106, quoted in Benedict T. Vivanio, "Beatitudes Found among Dead Sea Scrolls." *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18 (Nov/Dec 1992), p. 53.

[43] *Cf.* M. Eugene Boring, "The Historical-Critical Method's 'Criteria of Authenticity': The Beatitudes in Q and Thomas as a Test Case." *Semeia* 44 (1988), pp. 9-44.

the category of *gnomological* literature:[44] mnemonic devices used in the training of the young in an age long before the advent of reference dictionaries, the "internet," and encyclopedias. Literacy in the first century CE was not as widespread as today; nor were books and other written documents as plentiful. A major part of education involved memory-work, which had the effect of continuing a reliable oral tradition and training the students' minds to be especially receptive of forms that were easily memorized.

> In dealing with older students ... the Rabbis often used another method.... The Rabbi would introduce a topic and there would be a full discussion of it based on the Law, traditional interpretations of it, personal experiences, and disciples' questions and comments. At the end the Rabbi would provide a poetic summary which would serve as a general reminder of the discussion and also give an indication of the main issue at stake. Disciples were expected to commit these summary statements to memory.[45]

Accepting this as a standard rabbinic teaching method, it is not inconceivable that a long discusion of the meaning of " חֶסֶד " might be condensed to "Blessed are those who show mercy; mercy shall be shown to them" (Matthew 5.7, REB).[46] In their present canonical form, these Beatitudes, or summary statements (*gnomologia*) stand at the head of a larger summary of Jesus' teaching, the "Sermon on the Mount" itself. The "Sermon" itself is an "epitome," a literary genre that was common from the fourth century BCE on.[47] An epitome (derived from the Greek ἐπιτεμένω [Latin, *epitoma*]) is a condensation of a larger work, made by a redactor who may or may not have been the author of the original work. Out of pre-existing material the redactor fashions a new work which is more a

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[44] Betz, p. 96.

[45] J. R. C. Perkin, "Translating for Liturgy" in *The Undoing of Babel: Watson Kirkconnell - The Man and his Work.* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 91. *cf.* Henri Daniel-Rops, *Daily Life in the Time of Jesus*. (New York: Mentor-Omega, 1962), pp. 112-115; 267-70; J. D. M. Derrett, *Jesus's Audience*. (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), pp. 143 f.

[46] *Cf.* Perkin, pp. 91-92.

[47] Betz, p. 76.

"systematic synopsis" than an anthology.[48] These epitomai are characterised by brief, precise statements, exactly as one finds them in the "Sermon on the Mount." Furthermore, beginning such an epitome with a collection of gnomological devices "was almost a literary convention."[49]

[48] Betz, p. 76.

[49] *Cf.* Betz, p. 105.

ihs xps · Matheus homo

Chapter 3: An Historical Survey of English Translations

A note on Early English Versions before Wyclif

The early history of the Scriptures in English displays "sporadic and piecemeal efforts at translation,"[1] and begins not with a translation but with a paraphrase. Caedmon (d. 680), a herdsman turned monk of Streanaeshalch (Whitby) had the gift of turning various narratives of the Old and New Testaments into poetry. He himself did not translate but transformed the text of the Scriptures as it was related to him into moving and vigorous verse.[2] His work is recorded in a tenth-century manuscript in the Bodleian Library.

The magnificent Lindisfarne Gospels provide the first extant translation of the Bible into any form of English. The document is the work of two men: the Vulgate Latin text by Bishop Eadfrith (c.680), and the interlinear translation into the Northumbrian Old English dialect was added much later by Aldred in the mid-tenth century. The book was used at the celebration of the eleventh anniversary of the death of the much-beloved Bishop (later Saint) Cuthbert (c. 635 - 687)[3] when his remains were moved to a coffin-reliquary "in order to make more widely known the height of glory attained after death by God's servant."[4] This book, now preserved in the British Museum, is "among the greatest achievements in manuscript illumination of any age."[5]

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[1] J. R. Branton, "Versions, English." *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), vol. 4, p. 761.

[2] *cf.* Bede, *History of the English Church and People*, II.24.

[3] Magnus Magnusson, ed. *Chamber's Biographical Dictionary*. (Edinburgh: W & R Chambers, 1990), p. 375.

[4] Bede, *History*, IV.30.

[5] Peter Hunter Blair, *Anglo-Saxon England*. (London: The Folio Society, 1997), p. 302.

The Rushworth Gospels date from about the same period. The translation (gloss) of Matthew is independent; the Northumbrian rendering of the other three gospels is copied from the Lindisfarne Gospels.[6]

Around the beginning of the eighth century several translations of the psalter are known to have been made: one by Aldhelm (c.640 - 709); another by Guthlac (c.673 - 714). The Venerable Bede (673 - 735) translated the Creed and Lord's Prayer into English. He also translated the Fourth Gospel, but it is not known if he worked from a Latin or Greek text. Centuries later, during the turbulent dawn of the Reformation, Bede's example would be an inspiration to Purvey, Wyclif's reviser.[7]

In addition to his great military and political accomplishments, Alfred the Great (849-899), King of Wessex, was also a scholar, involved in educational and literary reforms, and translated many Latin works. While the extent of his labours in Biblical translation is uncertain, it is known that at the time of his death he was engaged in translating the Psalter into the English of his day.

Six manuscripts are extant of the Wessex Gospels, a mid-tenth-century (but possibly as late as 1050) text family of independent translations.

> It is in the south [of England] that we first meet with ... a translation of the Gospels existing by itself, apart from the Latin text on which it was based. There are in all six copies of this translation now extant, two at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two in the British Museum, with a fragment of a seventh at Oxford. All these are closely related to one another, being either actually copied from one another or taken from a common original without much variation. ... There can be no doubt that the original translation ... was made in the south-west of England in the region known as Wessex, no later than the middle of the tenth century.[8]

[6] John Eadie, *The English Bible*. 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1876), vol. I, pp.14-15.

[7] Eadie, vol. 1, p. 12.

[8] Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*. 5th edition. (London: Eyne and Spottiswoode, 1958), p. 269.

After 1066 the old Anglo-Saxon dialects, under the influence of the French of the Norman invaders, began to give way to a new sort of English. Although over the next 250 years

> the process lopped off many branchlets and twigs, it left the living trunk which soon renewed its youth, and putting forth fresh vigour and beauty, formed a national tongue in which Wycliffe was at length able to give an English Bible to an English people. In fine, it was surely natural that the early English tongue, in spite of exotic additions and changes in spelling and structure, should cling to an Englishman throughout his national history, and that to it should belong the terms which tell what he sees above him and around him, in fruits, flowers, and seasons, which describe his own physical organs and his inner emotions, the weapons he wields, the tools he handles, the products of his handywork, and the animals about him in pasture and tillage, and which name the close and familiar relations of life, his heart and his home, and his surroundings from birth to death.[9]

One of these translations that shows the Norman influence on the developing English language is the "Ormulum," named after Orm, a northern Augustinian canon. Dating c. 1170 - 1200, Orm's work is written in the orthography which he developed on phonetic principles.[10] "Untidy and unprofessional" in appearance (compared with earlier illuminated manuscripts)[11] it consists of 20,000 lines of verse paraphrasing the Gospels and Acts.[12]

The perpetual popularity of the psalter is well-attested: the fourteenth-century West Midland Psalter, a metrical version dated c. 1300, and the translation and exposition by Richard Rolle (c. 1290- 1349) are among numerous translations, paraphrases and versifications of the time.

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[9] Eadie, vol. 1, pp. 29 f.

[10] Magnusson, p. 1108.

[11] M. T. Clanchy, *Early Medieval England.* (London: The Folio Society, 1997), p. 424.

[12] Eadie, vol. 1, p. 30.

All of these translations are important from an historical perspective, but really have little to do with the mainstream of English translations which begins with the work of Tyndale but was prefigured in John Wyclif, the "Morningstar of the Reformation."

> Before Wyclif ... efforts at translation were not designed primarily for the use of the average man, nor produced in quantities that would touch him. They were not complete Bibles but small sections. They were designed for few readers, principally among the clergy. Moreover they did not create the ecclesiastical problems later translations often produced, probably because of the very nature of the sections translated and because the laity had so little access to them in any case.[13]

The Eve of the Reformation

In pre-Reformation England, religious devotion expressed itself in typical forms of medieval piety: attendance at Mass (but one can hardly speak of the *reception* of Communion); the influence of mystics such as Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, and Thomas à Kempis; veneration and invocation of the saints and the Virgin Mary. Many people, then as now, were preoccupied with questions of heaven and hell, death and judgement, salvation and damnation.[14]

This was a time of immense wealth and growth for the English Church. Two-thirds of all English parish churches were either constructed or renovated during the 1400s. Religious establishments – from hospitals to elementary schools – were founded and endowed. The Mass was a tremendous money-maker. Votive and requiem masses were purchased for special purposes and for the repose of the departed. Religious guilds were established for the purpose of providing Christian burial and Requiem masses for their members. Funds from the guilds were also used for road works, banking services, and other things as diverse as midwifery and providing a clock-work Resurrection scene

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[13] Branton, *IDB*, vol. 4, p. 761.

[14] John Guy, *Tudor England*. (New York *et al.*: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 21

mounted on the back of an elephant for Henry VII's formal entry into Bristol in 1487![15] By comparison, around this time in Wittenberg, 10,000 Masses were said *per annum*; in Cologne, 400,000 Based on the doctrine of merit and the repository of the merits of the saints, the Brotherhood of the Little Ship of St Ursula (a religious foundation in Cologne) had accrued works of supererogation amounting to 6,000 Masses, 3,000 Psalters, 200,000 Te Deums, 200,000 rosaries, 630,000,000 Our Fathers and Hail Marys which were stored up for use by the Brotherhood's members after their deaths![16]

The pre-Reformation church was the church of the cleric: lay people were not permitted a significant role in its worship life or daily affairs. The Mass was conducted in Latin, and most of that *sotto voce*. With emphasis upon Eucharistic adoration, rather than reception of the elements, communion was infrequent, often only at Easter. The cup had been withdrawn from the laity at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.[17] Homiletical skill was at an all-time low, and little that sounded forth from the pulpit taught the congregation about faith or morality.[18]

Except in the city of London, the clergy were generally poorly educated. Two out of every three London clergy held university degrees, compared to one in five in the diocese of Canterbury, and one in ten in Surrey. Figures for the dioceses of Lincoln and Norwich are similarly unremarkable, fewer than two in ten. Furthermore, few of these degrees were actually in theology. Absenteeism and pluralism were ways of life. Poor

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[15] Guy, p. 22.

[16] Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity*. 2 volumes. Translated by James L. Schaff. (Philadelpha: Fortress Press, 1985), vol. 1, p. 412.

[17] Theodore Tappert (ed.), *The Book of Concord*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 50, n. 1.

[18] Guy, p. 22. Nonetheless, the laity were not entirely ignorant of the Bible. The magnificent stained glass windows presented the Scriptures in picture form, and the medieval Mystery Plays gave lay people a knowledge not just of isolated Bible episodes, but an overview of the whole biblical history of salvation.

country parsons often had to resort to farming in order to keep from starving. Writing in the fourteenth century, William Page summed up the situation in these depressing terms:

> And many are the priests, in these days, who neither know the law of God, nor teach others. But giving themselves up to sloth, they spend their time upon banquetings and carousals, they covet earthly things, they grow wise in earthly things, constantly in the streets, rarely in the church, slow to investigate the faults of their parishioners, ready to track the footprints of hares or some other wild beast. ... More freely do they offer food to a dog than to a poor man; more wait upon them at table than at mass; they wish to have men servants and maid servants with them, but not clerics.[19]

Among the parish clergy, moral laxity and pastoral laziness were the main faults. Not all the priests clanked through their villages clad in chain mail like the rector of Addington, Northamptonshire; then again, not all of them were regular in their prayers, preaching, or behaviour.

For all of the laxity and sloth among most clergy, heresy was not common in England. Following the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 a number of statutes were enacted to provide stricter penalties for heresy (as though death were not enough), including the seizure of the suspect's goods and lands, making heresy not only a spiritual but also a civil offence.[20]

The wealth and splendour of the English prelates paled in comparison with that of the papal court, and the power exercised by local diocesan bishops or archdeacons was but a dim reflection of the magisterial authority wielded by the Bishop of Rome. In 1302 Pope Boniface VIII issued the bull *Unam sanctam ecclesiam* which declared that there was one and only one church which had one and only one body and one and only one

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[19] William Page, *Oculus sacerdotis*; quoted in Guy, p. 23

[20] Guy, p. 25

head: Jesus Christ.[21] Christ had entrusted this authority to his vicar, Peter, and Peter passed on this authority to his successors, who in 1302 happened to be Pope Boniface VIII. The pope was not merely Peter's successor; he was the vicar of Christ and ruled with the authority of Christ himself. Therefore, submission to the bishop of Rome was declared to be necessary for salvation:

> *Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus, dicimus, diffinimus et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis.*[22]

Not many years after this pronouncement the Western Church was rocked by scandal. It was a period of total depravity for the papacy, the curia, and the hierarchy of the Church that saw them living in splendour and schism, carnal pleasures and intrigue.[23] During this "Babylonian Captivity" of the Church – the Avignon Papacy from 1309 to 1377 – the Church was utterly under the influence of the kings of France. England had been at war with France from 1339 to 1453. But once the Papacy was established in Avignon, being anti-French was equivalent to being anti-Papal.[24] In the wake of the restoration of one pope in Rome, the Reform Councils (Pisa [1409], Constance [1415], and Basel [1431-39]) all attempted, but failed to give the Church new direction.[25]

As the morning stars of the Reformation began to shine at the end of a long, dark night, the papacy was symbolic of the state of the Church as a whole:

> [A] depiction of those who held the highest dignity in Christendom at the close of the Middle Ages is manifestly suited for providing the justification of and necessity for the Reformation. ... Paul II (1464-71)

[21] This was as much a polemical statement against the Eastern Orthodox Churches as aganst any Western schismatics. The christological and ecclesiological debates and the ensuing Great Schism of the eleventh century were still fairly relatively fresh in the minds of the Roman authorities.

[22] Quoted in Aland, vol. 1, p. 337*f.*

[23] Aland, vol. I, 346*ff.*

[24] Aland, vol. I, 359*f.*

[25] Aland, vol. I, pp. 393*ff.*

> comes off the best, for Innocent VIII ceremoniously married his illegitimate children in the Vatican and had the Sultan pay him bribes to keep his brother in prison. Finally, we need only call Alexander VI (1492-1503) by his given name of Rodrigo Borgia to be reminded of the unholy trinity of father, son Caesar, and daughter Lucretia Borgia, who ever since that time have been regarded as the embodiment of depravity. That was different for the next two popes, Julius II (1503-13) and Leo X (1513-21). But these two as well were anything but shepherds of Christ's flock. Julius II was a warrior.... And Leo X was a humanist, completely oriented toward the world and without any understanding for what was going on...[26]

A despotic ecclesial hierarchy, no Bible in the vernacular, and lax standards of education and morality among parish clergy: at the beginning of the sixteenth century, these were the hallmarks of the Church, not the preaching of the Gospel or an example of morality. But most of all, because the Scriptures were not available to the laity, the clergy were able to visit upon them the most "abominable things and idolatries."[27]

Wyclif

John Wyclif (c. 1324-1384), the "Morningstar of the Reformation," aroused the fury of the Church hierarchy both through his protests and his translation of the Latin Bible into English. His literal translation was based on the Vulgate and designed for the common person. He completed the New Testament in 1380 and the Old Testament in 1382. He was assisted in the translation of the Old Testament by Nicholas of Hereford who was excommunicated for his efforts. His word for word translation was revised and updated meaning for meaning by John Purvey in 1388. In the wake of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 an Act of Parliament in 1390 sought to suppress his translation.

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[26] Aland, vol. I, pp. 405-6.

[27] John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs.* (Springdale, Penn.: Whitaker House, 1981), p. 140.

Wyclif's appeal was not to the academic theologians of his age but to the common people. He understood the importance of the laity being able to study the Bible in the vernacular, as he wrote in one of his tracts, *The Wicket*:

> Cristen men and wymmen, olde and yonge, shulden studie fast in the Newe Testament, for it is of ful autorite, and opyn to undirstonding of simple men, as to the poyntis that be moost nedeful to salvacioun. ... Each place of holy writ, both opyn and derk, techith mekenes and charite; and therfor he that kepeth mekenes and charite hath the trewe undirstondying and perfectioun of al holy writ. ... Therefore no simple man of wit be afred unmesurabli to studie in the text of holy writ... and no clerk be proude of the verry undirstondyng of holy writ, fo why undirstondyng of hooly writ with outen charite that kepith Goddis [be]heestis, makith a man depper dampned... and pride and covetise of clerkis is cause of her blindnes and eresie, and priveth them fro verrey undirstondyng of holy writ.[28]

Although he escaped execution during his lifetime, the Council of Constance ordered his exhumation and burning in 1414 and after that many of his Bibles were burnt. Nonetheless, about 170 copies in various states of repair are still extant. In 1408 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, summoned the English clergy to a synod at Oxford. The synod passed the Constitutions of Oxford, thirteen decrees against Lollardry (the movement set in motion by Wyclif), one of which forbade the translation or even the reading of any part of Scripture in the vernacular without episcopal permission.[29]

[28] Quoted in Winston S. Churchill, *A History of the English-Speaking Peoples*. Vol 1: *The Birth of Britain* (London: Cassell, 1974), p. 265.

[29] F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible: A History of Translations*. (London: Lutterworth Press, 1961), p. 21.

Tyndale: His Translation in Context

The importance of Tyndale's work as a translator cannot be overestimated. A brief biographical sketch is offered here to underscore the significance of his contribution to the history of the Bible in English, an influence that he continues to exert *post mortem* to this day.

William Tyndale (he sometimes went by the name Hutchins) was born in Gloucestershire around 1494.[30] He was born at a time that may rightly be described as a *less* religious age than our own because Church and State were one.[31] Both continental reform ideas (*i.e.*, Lutheranism) and Lollardry can be found in the writings of Tyndale – but not in his Bible translation: it is thoroughly English.[32]. Tyndale, along with other English evangelical preachers of his day held that the Scriptures preceded the Church: the Bible was first; the rites, ceremonies, and doctrines of the Church were secondary: *prima Scriptura*.[33] Foxe describes Tyndale as being appointed of God as a "...mattock to shake the inward roots and foundation of the Pope's proud prelacy..." and continues:

> William Tyndale, the faithful minister of Christ, was born about the borders of Wales, and brought up from a child in the University of Oxford, where he, by long continuance, increased as well in the knowledge of tongues, and other liberal arts, as especially in the knowledge of the Scriptures, whereunto his mind was singularly addicted; insomuch that he, lying then in Magdalen Hall, read privily to certain students and fellows of Magdalen some parcel of divinity; instructing them in the knowledge and truth of the Scriptures. His manners and conversation being

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[30] Bruce, p. 28; see also David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography*. (London: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 9-13.

[31] Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*. (New York: Penguin, 1985), p. 7.

[32] Guy, p. 119

[33] Guy, pp. 120-121.

> correspondent to the same, were such, that all they that knew him, reputed him to be a man of most virtuous disposition, and of life unspotted.[34]

Graduates were required to teach; accordingly, Tyndale returned to his native Gloucestershire to work as a tutor in the home of Sir John Walsh. The Walsh house was frequented by "sundry abbots, deans, archdeacons, with divers other doctors, and great beneficed men," with whom Tyndale would enter into lively debate, discussing Luther and Erasmus and the Scriptures.

Tyndale was an opinionated young man who did not hesitate to express his mind nor back up his opinions with Scriptural proofs. Eventually the "sundry abbots" *et al.* with whom he was wont to debate grew weary of him, "and bare a secret grudge in their hearts against him." Not even Sir John and Lady Walsh were sure what to make of him. One evening, after returning from a banquet hosted by some of the "doctors" who used to frequent the Walsh house, they questioned Tyndale about some of the things "whereof the priests had talked at their banquet." When he began to refute the opinions expressed by the clerics at the banquets, Lady Walsh exclaimed that she found it difficult to believe that he was wiser than the older and better-paid men to whom they had listened earlier that night.[35]

The local clergy, when they found that they were now coolly received by the Walshes because of Tyndale's influence, "began to grudge and storm against Tyndale, railing against him in alehouses and other places, affirming that his sayings were heresy; and accusing him secretly to the chancellor, and others of the bishop's officers."[36] Tyndale was eventually summoned before the bishop's chancellor, who, unable to sustain the charges levelled against him "reviled and rated" and then released him.

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[34] Foxe, p. 135.

[35] Foxe, pp. 136–7

[36] Foxe, pp. 137-8.

One of the milestones in Tyndale's career came shortly after this during a meeting with a "certain divine" who was provoked by Tyndale's radical thinking to make the statement: "We were better to be without God's laws than the Pope's." Tyndale replied: "I defy the Pope and all his laws. If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou dost!"[37]

No longer welcome in the Gloucestershire countryside, he moved to London and, in accordance with the requirements of the Constitutions of Oxford, approached the bishop of London, Cuthbert Tonstall, for permission to translate the Bible into English; he refused.[38]

> Being refused of the bishop he came to Humphrey Mummuth [Monmouth], alderman of London, and besought him to help him: who the same time took him into his house, where he said Tyndale lived (as Mummuth said) like a good priest, studying both night and day. He would eat but sodden meat [*i.e.*, bland food] by his good will, nor drink but small single [*i.e.*, weak] beer. He was never seen in the house to wear linen about him, all the space of his renting there.[39]

After about a year in London, having observed the arrogance of the preachers, the ostentation of the higher clergy and the general abuse of power in the Church, Tyndale understood not only that "there was no room in the bishop's house for him to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England."[40] Assisted by Monmouth and others he made his way to Hamburg, Germany in May 1524 to continue his translation there.

Printing of Tyndale's New Testament began in Cologne where he was almost undone by the printers. Their boasting attracted the attention of John Cochlaus, a heretic

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[37] Foxe, pp. 138-9.

[38] Foxe, p. 193.

[39] Foxe, p. 140.

[40] Foxe, p. 140.

hunter who provided for their consumption excessive amounts of alcohol for the purpose of determining the nature and whereabouts of Tyndale's work. Tyndale, having been forewarned, escaped to Worms and completed the printing there.[41] In the early 1500s 600-700 copies of a printed work was considered a large run; the first edition of Tyndales's 1526 New Testament numbered 3,000 copies

Sometime between 1526 and 1528 Tyndale moved to Antwerp. There, his supporter Augustine Packington played the role of "double agent," pretending to Bishop Tonstall that he was Tyndale's enemy. Packington offered to buy all the available New Testaments for the bishop to destroy, if Tonstall would pay for them. Tyndale's New Testament was expensive: it cost £3; but manuscripts of earlier Wycliffite versions had cost from £20 to over £50.[42] In due course, "the Bishop of London had the books, Packington had the thanks, and Tyndale had the money" – which paid for a corrected edition which then "came thick and threefold into England." (In fact, 18,000 copies of his New Testament would ultimately reach England; only two copies survive.) This puzzled the bishop, who could not understand where all the New Testaments were coming from. Packington told a mystified bishop that he had bought all that he could find but that more must have been printed. He suggested that the bishop should consider buying the printing plates as well…!

While at Cambridge, George Constantine had been reform-minded, but upon his arrest around 1527 on suspicion of heresy by the chancellor, Sir Thomas More, he betrayed Tyndale. Under interrogation by Thomas More, Constantine was promised immunity if he would reveal the supporters of Tyndale, Joye, and others "beyond the sea" engaged in the work of translating and publishing the Scriptures. Constantine replied,

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[41] Geddes MacGregor, *A Literary History of the Bible: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day.* (Nashville: Abington, 1968),pp. 112-3.

[42] Hill, p. 11.

"My lord, I will tell you truly: it is the Bishop of London that hath holpen us, for he hath bestowed among us a great deal of money upon the New Testaments to burn them; and that hath been, and yet is, our only succor and support."[43] Undoubtedly an irritated More soon told Bishop Tonstall, "I told you so."

But by this time Tyndale was already at work on the Hebrew Scriptures. After translating the Pentateuch Tyndale decided to have the printing done at Hamburg, but while sailing up the coast of Holland he was shipwrecked "by which he lost all his books, writings, and copies, his money and his time, and so was compelled to begin all again."[44]

Tyndale's undoing came while living in Antwerp with Thomas Poyntz, who kept a house for English merchants. In early 1535 he was revising his revised New Testament (1534). The Act of Supremacy had just ended the jurisdiction of the Pope in England but Tyndale would be undone by a papist, Henry Phillips. The English merchants of Antwerp commonly got together for meals, and Tyndale was often in attendance. It was at one of these meetings that Phillips made Tyndale's acquaintance. Over time, the two men struck up a friendship and Tyndale placed great confidence in Phillips, a trust not shared by Poyntz.

Poyntz had to leave Antwerp on business. During his absence, Phillips went to Brussels and returned with the procuror-general and several officers from the Emperor's court. On or about 21 May 1535, under the pretence of going to borrow forty shillings from Tyndale, Phillips arranged to meet him for dinner. Phillips returned at dinner-time to get Tyndale. The Poyntz house had a long, narrow entrance hall, not wide enough for the two men to walk abreast. Tyndale would have followed Phillips, but Phillips insisted that Tyndale go first. Two of the Emperor's officers were waiting just outside the front door. Tyndale was trapped and his arrest was a simple matter. He was then taken to

[43] Foxe, p. 144.

[44] Foxe, pp. 144-5.

Filford [Vilvorde] castle where he was imprisoned for one year and 135 days. Henry VIII might have intervened, but did nothing. Conditions in jail were not pleasant for him. In a letter to the Marquis of Bergen, discovered in the mid-nineteenth century, Tyndale complains of head colds and catarrh, requests a warm cap and coat, some mending supplies, a lamp, but above all a Hebrew Bible, grammar, and dictionary so that his time might be profitably spent in study.[45]

Vilvorde was Tyndale's last home. On 6 October 1536 he was led to the stake, strangled by the executioner and burned as a heretic. His last words are reputed to have been, "Lord! Open the King of England's eyes."

In an age when deviation from the accepted tradition of interpretation could mean excommunication or even execution, the bishops were very cautious about placing the Scriptures in the hands of the people. The place for the hearing of Scripture was in the context of public worship where the hearing of the text was accompanied by the exposition of the text in the sermon. Placing the Bible in the hands of the common folk was seen as an invitation to heresy. However, keeping the Bible out of the hands of the common person was impossible after the advent of the printing press.[46]

Tyndale's work as a translator and theologian had religious implications and political implications[47]: the Church of Rome was so mighty and so far-reaching that the English people might only be rescued from its clutches by a remarkable and god-fearing

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[45] H. G. May, *Our English Bible in the Making: The Word of Life in Living Language*. Revised Edition. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), pp. 24-5.

[46] Johann Gutenberg's invention of the printing press inaugurated a new age in the transmission of the Scriptures. Not only was the Bible more readily and more cheaply available than before, the possibility of error decreased: successive editions of the Scriptures could be corrected more easily than before. Any mistakes would be the same throughout a printing run and could be corrected in the next impression. Manuscripts had the possibility of becoming more corrupt with each copying; the printed text, more correct.

[47] For instance., the rendering of ἐκκλησια as congregation rather than church. He also substituted senior for priest; love for charity; favour for grace; witnessing for confessing; repentance for penance. These six words formed the basis of Thomas More's objections to the translation.

monarch. There is an ambiguity in Tyndale's politics. On the one hand, he virtually championed the divine right of kings, which caught the attention of Henry VIII; on the other hand he refused to support the king's divorce. He could say that the king was subject to God alone, but that the king's subjects were bound to obey divine rather than royal authority.

Tyndale's contribution to the Reformation and to the advent of the printed English Bible is undeniable. What is perhaps less apparent is his continuing influence on the English language in general, his tremendous influence on literacy (his work became a "first reader" for many of the newly literate), and in particular, the tradition of Biblical translation into English.

After Tyndale to the King James Version

One of the abiding influences of Tyndale has to do with literacy: the availability of the Bible in English increased the stimulus to learn to read.[48] But beyond Tyndale's contribution to literacy (which is beyond the scope of this present study) lies Tyndale's contribution to the tradition of translation of the English Bible, down to the present day.

> Erasmus had expressed his wish that the Bible should become so familiar to the common people that bits of it would be sung by men and women working in the fields. Tyndale conceived a more ambitious form of the aspiration. He hoped that the plowboy should come to know his Bible better than now did his priest.[49]

Tyndale's translation was an excellent one: based on the best Greek text of the day, the English is free and idiomatic. It has exerted considerable influence on many subsequent translations and many modern translations have reverted to Tyndale's

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[48] Hill, 11.

[49] Geddes MacGregor, *A Literary History of the Bible: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day.* (Nashville: Abington, 1968), p. 111.

renderings[50] Tyndale's voice is still heard from many a lectern today through successive translations built directly or indirectly on his pioneering work.

The next translation after Tyndale is that of the Bishop of Exeter, Miles Coverdale (1488-1569) who used Tyndale for the New Testament and Pentateuch, but modified such terms as were officially objectionable so that it gained the toleration of the king and bishops. Coverdale and Tyndale first met in Hamburg and then worked together in Antwerp. Appearing within a year of Tyndale's arrest, Coverdale's edition is the first complete printed English Bible. Ironically, while Tyndale was executed, Coverdale lived to a ripe old age and was buried with honour under the altar of St Bartholomew's Church in London.

The Matthew Bible (1537) was edited by John Rogers. In 1534 he had met Tyndale in Antwerp. The first man to have his translation receive a royal licence (from Henry VIII), he was burnt at the stake by Bloody Mary in 1555. His Bible was as much Tyndale as possible; but where there was no Tyndale translation available, he made use of Coverdale. The Matthew Bible was the first English Bible to be printed in England rather than on foreign soil.

Although he was a lawyer by profession, Richard Taverner was a Greek scholar by vocation. His edition of the Bible (1539) was a revision of the Matthew Bible, with changes made in the direction of a more flowing, idiomatic English style. The Old Testament was emended with changes made on the basis of the Vulgate text. Changes to the New Testament were based on the Greek text.

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[50] MacGregor, p. 114. Compare, for example Matthew 5.3a in the NEB, (1961, 1970) and in the REB, (1989) – which is a return to Tyndale. Tyndale was also as good a reviser as he was a translator Examples: 1526: Blessed are the maynteyners of peace 1534: Blessed are the peacemakers / 1526: And ye shall fynd ese unto your soules 1534: And ye shall fynd rest unto youre soules. / 1526: The faveour of oure lorde Jesus Christ 1534: The grace of oure Lorde Jesus Christ / 1526: Beholde the lyles of the felde 1534: Considre the lylies of the felde (MacGregor, p. 117).

The Great Bible (1539), the first English translation approved for use in the churches, was not to be "so blatantly indebted to Tyndale as were all existing printed versions."[51] Cromwell entrusted the project to Coverdale, who would use the Matthew Bible (rather than his own translation) as the basis. A copy of this enormous (15" x 9") volume was placed in every parish church in England. The Great Bible is essentially Tyndale's translation without the marginal notes plus the chapter summaries of the Matthew Bible. The Convocation of 1542 declared the Great Bible unsuitable for public reading in the churches, but it continued in use until 1568.

In 1543 all translations "bearing the name of Tyndale" were condemned, and all notes were to be removed from other versions. Only the upper classes were to have access to the Great Bible. The Geneva Bible (1560), sometimes called the "Breeches Bible," was a revision of the Great Bible prepared by exiled Englishmen under the direction of William Whittingham (John Calvin's brother-in-law). It borrowed so extensively from Tyndale that it is more a revision of Tyndale than an independent translation. The best translation thus far, it went through 140 editions until 1611.

Matthew Parker, archbishop of Canterbury, disliked the notes of the Geneva Bible. In 1561 he undertook a revision of the Great Bible. The Bishops' Bible appeared in 1568 with the Old Testament and Apocrypha based on the Great Bible and the New Testament relying heavily on the Geneva Bible.

Roman Catholics had to wait until the Douay-Rheims translation (1582-1610) of the Vulgate for an authorised version of the Scriptures in English, and even then the task was undertaken as "a tolerated necessity."[52] The translation is influenced by the Geneva

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[51] MacGregor, p. 136.

[52] J. R. Branton, "Versions, English" *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989), vol. IV: p. 766.

Bible, but is characterised by Latinisms reflecting the doctrinal standards of the Roman Catholic Church. This Latin vocabulary exerted influence on King James' translators.

The King James Version

In 1604 a decision was made at the Hampton Court Conference to make a new translation of the Bible from the original languages. It would be published without notes and authorised for use in the Church of England. (Despite its common appellation, "The *Authorised* Version," it never was officially authorised by Church or state.)

Forty-seven translators participated in six working groups: three for the Old Testament, one for the Apocryphal books, and two for the New Testament. The translators were bound by fifteen rules:

1. The Bishops' Bible was to be followed as much as possible.[53]
2. Proper names were to be retained.
3. Traditional ecclesiastical words were to be retained; *e.g,* εκκλησια was to be translated *church*, not *congregation*, as Tyndale had done.
4. Disputed words would be translated as they had been understood by the Church Fathers and other ancient authorities.
5. Traditional chapter divisions of Stephen Langton (13th century) were to be maintained. (The 1551 verse divisions of Robert Estienne were also accepted.)

6,7. There were to be no notes except for explanations and cross references.[54]

8. Translations would be worked on by individuals, then submitted to the working groups for evaluation.
9. The working groups would then submit their drafts to the other groups.
10. Editorial powers of veto could be exercised by any working group having difficulties with the draft translation of another.
11. In case of difficulty, expert advice was to be sought.

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[53] In fact, it was followed the least of any of the available translations.

[54] There were about 17,000 of them(!).

12. Bishops were to see that clergy with expertise in the original languages were to make their services available.
13. Directors of the project were established at Westminster, Chester, Cambridge, and Oxford.
14. If the reading of the Bishops' Bible proved unsatisfactory, the translations of Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthew, the Great Bible, or the Geneva Bible were to be consulted.[55]
15. Experts in the Church Fathers were to oversee the process outlined in Rule 4.

It took thirty years for the KJV to be accepted and the popular Geneva Bible was finally discontinued in 1644. The KJV Preface addresses anticipated criticisms, in particular that there was no need for a new translation. Indeed, the KJV was *not* a new translation, but a traditional one reworked. The translators admit that they were taking back to the anvil that which had already been hammered in order to make a good translation a better one. First issued in 1611, it was first revised in 1616 with hundreds of spelling changes. Between 1611 and 1640 182 editions were printed. In 1625 the Apocrypha, which had been carelessly translated, was first removed. The fifth Book of Common Prayer of 1662 uses the KJV for the Sunday lessons, while retaining the Psalter of the Great Bible. In 1701 Archbishop Ussher's chronology (*i.e.*, Creation began in 4004 BCE, *etc.*) was introduced. The 1769 Oxford edition continues to be used as the standard text to the present day. The KJV first appeared with the Geneva Bible notes in Holland in 1642, and in England in 1649.

After the KJV to the English Revised Version

There were all sorts of problems with the English text of the KJV. Early editions were peppered with misprints, including the omission of the word "not" in Exodus 20.14 in a 1631 edition, thereby commanding adultery!

[55] The net result was that upwards of 80% of the New Testament and the Pentateuch is word-for-word from Tyndale. This means that large portions of the KJV were eighty years old when it was first issued.

Interest in Bible translation did not cease with the appearance of the KJV. Henry Ainsworth, an English minister living in Amsterdam, translated the Pentateuch, Psalms, and Canticles between 1593 and 1622. In 1645 John Lightfoot urged the House of Commons to review the translation of the KJV and in 1653 and 1657 review committees were established by Parliament, only to be abandoned upon the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.

The independent translations in the years following the publication of the KJV can be divided into three categories: Paraphrase, Free Renderings, and Sectarian Translations.[56] Roman Catholics had to make do with various editions of the Douay-Rheims version until the twentieth century.

Paraphrase

Henry Hammond, 1653, New Testament and Psalms
Woodhead, Allestry, and Walker, 1675, Letters of Paul
Richard Baxter, 1685, New Testament
Daniel Whitby, 1703, KJV plus explanations in the text
Samuel Clarke[57], 1701, KJV plus explanations in the text
Thomas Pyle, 1715-1735, KJV plus explanations in the text
John Guyse, 1739-52, KJV plus explanations in the text

Free Renderings

Daniel Mace, 1729, New Testament in Greek and English. His Greek was very good....
Edward Harwood, 1768, New Testament. He tried to replace "the old vulgar version with the elegance of modern English." A few examples are in order:

> [The Magnificat] My soul with reverence adores my Creator, and all my faculties with transport join in celebrating the Goodness of God my Saviour, who hath in so signal a manner condescended to regard my poor and humble station. Transcendent goodness! Every future age will now conjoin in celebrating my happiness.[58]

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[56] Luther A. Weigle, "English Versions Since 1611" *The Cambridge History of the Bible*. S. L. Greenslade, ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1963), vol. 3, pp. 364 *et passim.*

[57] A close friend and defender of John Newton. *cf* Magnus Magnusson, ed., *Chamber's Biographical Dictionary*. (Edinburgh: W & R Chambers, 1990), p. 316.

[58] Remarkable words on the lips of a first-century, teen-aged Jewish maiden!

> [Nunc Dimittis] O God, thy promise to me is amply fulfilled. I now quit the post of human life with satisfaction and joy, since thou hast indulged mine eyes with so divine a spectacle as the great Messiah.
>
> [At the Transfiguration, Peter exclaims:] "Oh, Sir! What a delectable residence we might establish here!

Rudolphus Dickenson (Boston, Mass), 1833, New Testament. Again, a few examples are illuminating...

> [Luke 1.41] When Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the embryo was joyfully agitated.
>
> [Acts 26.24] Festus declared with a loud voice, "Paul, you are insane! Multiplied research drives you to distraction!"

Sectarian Translations

Gilbert Wakefield, 1791, New Testament (A controversial scholar, he renounced his Anglican orders and became a classical tutor in dissenting colleges. He later spent two years in prison for libel.)

William Newcome, 1796, New Testament (Based on Griesbach's Greek New Testament; became the basis of the 1808 Unitarian version.)

Nathaniel Scarlett, 1798, New Testament (Set up like a play. Translated "immerse" instead of "baptise.")

American Bible Union, 1850. (Another "immersion" translation.) Merged with American Baptist Publication Society in 1883, which produced an excellent translation that did not sell well.

Several other contributions to scholarship and translation were important for future English versions. As early as 1753 Robert Lowth (later bishop of London) was suggesting that Hebrew poerty should be translated as poerty; nonetheless, nothing was done in this regard for another two centuries. John Wesley's 1755 New Testament had 12,000 departures from the KJV text, three-quarters of which were accepted by the ERV editors. Three other eighteenth-century translations that enjoyed popular use were those of Philip Doddridge (1739-56, New Testament), George Campbell (Gospels, 1789), and James MacKnight (1795, Epistles).

The American lexicographer, Noah Webster (1758-1843) produced a translation of the New Testament in 1833 in which 150 words or phrases were changed from their

traditional rendering because they were thought to be erroneous or misleading; almost all of these have been accepted by later translators.[59] Webster's version was used by many Congregational churches. Various editions and revisions were published into the 1840s.

Aside: Manuscripts and Scholarship

The advent of the printing press is one of the most significant developments in recent human history. The availability of the printed word, not just expensive hand-copied manuscripts, but in relatively inexpensive mass-produced "runs" by the printer, has significantly influenced the course of history. Were it not for Gutenberg's invention, the course of the Reformation and its influence would doubtless have been different. The high standards of literacy of today can be traced back to Gutenberg: with the printed word within the financial grasp of the common people who could not have afforded hand-copied manuscripts, the ability to read – and the availability of something to read – was no longer the privilege of the upper classes alone. The Scriptures became a sort of primer-reader, used in the home for the education of the young. But the history of the printed Bible (and of printing!) begins with the publication in 1454 of a Latin psalter. It would not be for another sixty years that the Greek text of the New Testament was made available in printed form in the Complutensian Polyglot.

The edition of the Greek New Testament that is of present interest, however, is that of Desiderius Erasmus (c. 1466-1536), published in 1516. Erasmus made use of the manuscripts readily available to him in Basel, entered corrections in the margins, and sent them off to the printer. He never did have the ending of Revelation, so he translated it back into Greek from Latin. The errors which resulted from the printers' carelessness

[59] *E.g.*, which → who (persons); his → its (things); meat → food; demand → ask; let → hinder; prevent → go before; Holy Ghost → Holy Spirit.

– or lack of understanding of a Greek text – were, in time, corrected. The greater problem is the type of text it represented:

> Erasmus relied on manuscripts of the twelfth/thirteenth century which represented the Byzantine Imperial text, the Koine text, or the Majority text – however it may be known – the most recent and poorest of the various New Testament text types, and his successors have done the same.[60]

In time, Erasmus' text became known as the "Textus Receptus" (largely through a marketing strategy employed by the Elzevir publishers in 1633) – the "received text," implying verbal inspiration. Other editions of the Greek New Testament challenged the Textus Receptus, but did not unseat it for over three hundred years. The London Polyglot edited by Brian Walton 1655-57 made use of the fifth-century Codex Alexandrinus (A). John Fell's 1675 Testament made use of over 100 manuscripts. Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) first used α and β to evaluate readings in his 1734 edition. Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745-1812) identified three types of texts or textual families: the Western, Alexandrian, and Byzantine. In the 1830s Karl Lachmann (1793-1851) called for a return to the text (fourth century) used by the the early church.

Perhaps this period's most important name in the study of the textual history of the Greek New Testament is Constantin von Tischendorf (1815-1874). His search for early manuscripts led him to Saint Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai where in 1844 he discovered (so the story goes) a manuscript of ancient origin in the garbage bin. The fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus (א) contained the entire New Testament, large portions of the Old Testament, plus the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. Eventually, Tischendorf absconded with the manuscript to Russia (1859); the Russians sold it to the British Museum for £100,000 in 1933. Yet Tischendorf knew of only a small part of the manuscripts that are known today. In his *Editio octava critica maior* of

[60] Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*. (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1995), p. 4.

1869-1872, he made use of 64 uncials; today we know of 299. He had knowwldege of only one of the 96 papyri ($\mathfrak{p}^{11}$) known to modern scholarship, and only a fraction of the 2,812 miniscule manuscripts known today.

The English Revised Version

And so, it was with many experiments in translation (some more successful than others) in circulation, and the advances made in textual criticism by Tischendorf and others, that the call for a revision of the KJV was made at Canterbury Convocation in May, 1870. Work began almost immediately with twenty-four scholars under the direction of Bishop C. J. Elliott of Gloucester and Bristol beginning work on the New Testament on 22 June of the same year and twenty-four Old Testament scholars headed by Bishop E. H. Browne of Ely commencing eight days later. Of the sixty-five translators who would eventually participate in the making of the English Revised Version, seventeen were non-Anglicans (Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Unitarians). The Roman Catholic Church was invited to participate but declined.

Eight parameters were set down for the translators:

1. As few changes as possible were to be made.
2. Expression (*i.e.*, English style) was limited to that of earlier versions.
3. Two reviews of the translation were to be made.
4. The text translated was to be the one the best attested; if this differed from the KJV, it was to be noted.
5. The first revision of a text required 50% plus one votes to pass to the second revision; the second revision required a two-thirds majority acceptance.
6. Difficult passages would not be decided until the next morning.
7. Diacritical marks would be revised.
8. As in the case of the KJV, expert advice would be sought as required.

The Revised New Testament was published 17 May, 1881 and the Old Testament 19 May, 1885. In particular the New Testament scholars met serious criticism, not

because of their Greek but because of their usage of English – a slavish word-for-word reproduction of the Greek. As nearly as possible, one word in Greek was translated as one word in English with no words left out. The Greek word order and sentence construction was taken over in an unnatural way; articles and tenses were translated with a precision alien to English – an "awkward literalism devoid of beauty"[61] but a boon for students of Hebrew and Greek for use as a "crib" in preparing their own translations!

In some ways the methodology of the revision was flawed. Essentially the translators, late in the nineteenth century, tried to reproduce a seventeenth century classic, itself based on a sixteenth century work. Although this resulted in 30,000 deviations from the KJV text, the process of trying to maintain the linguistic style of the KJV ended up introducing archaic language unknown even in the older version.[62] On the positive side, the translation was produced using sound scholarship and with a better knowledge of the original texts – the appearance of the ERV also finally dislodged the Textus Receptus from its throne. The ERV established that poetry (especially Hebrew poetry) needed to be translated *as poetry*. Poetry was more clearly indicated as such and prose was set up in sense, rather than verse, paragraphs. The revision was adopted immediately for use in schools and churches, three million copies being ordered before it had even gone to the printers.

Important Twentieth Century Versions

The American Standard Version (1901) stands in the KJV tradition as an American "recension" of the ERV. The ASV used many variants that were placed by the ERV translators in the appendix of their work and returned to many KJV renderings that

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[61] Weigle, *CHB*, vol. 3, p. 371.

[62] Weigle, *CHB*, vol. 3, p. 371.

had been "abandoned needlessly." It sought to modernise the style while maintaining the rhetorical and linguistic beauty of the KJV. Like the ERV, the ASV is not a particularly elegant translation.[63]

R. F. Weymouth, a classics scholar at University College, London, was an advisor to the mainly lay translators of *The Twentieth Century New Testament.* He was concerned with the awkward language of the KJV and his own translation, *The New Testament in Modern Speech* (1902, *op. posthum.*) was designed to be understood by most people in their private devotions. He said in the preface,

> Alas, the great majority of even "new translations," so called, are in reality only Tyndale's immortal work a little – and often very little – modernised.

James Moffatt, the famous Scottish theologian, published his influential translation of the New Testament in 1913 (the Old Testament would follow in 1924). In the preface to his New Testament he admits that some words defy translation into English, such as λόγος, μυστήριον, δικαιοσύνη, *etc.* Based on the text of von Soden, great lexical study went into the translation, especially of the vocabulary of the various papyri documents being discovered. He treated the New Testament text like any other piece of Greek prose and considered the theory of verbal inspiration a hindrance to the translator. He acknowledged the importance and abiding influence of the KJV, and he realised that modernising an ancient text is very difficult when a long-standing tradition that has introduced many turns of phrase into the language must be overcome.

In 1923 Edgar Goodspeed's *The New Testament: An American Translation* appeared. A professor at the University of Chicago, Goodspeed felt that American readers had been dependent on British translations for too long. To him, the Greek New Testament displayed "little literary art," being written in common, everyday language,

[63] There is something particularly jarring about the translation of יהוה as "Jehovah" throughout the Old Testament. The decision was based on an attempt to get away from "Jewish superstition" regarding the divine name, which the translators considered unimportant in light of the Christian understanding of the "personal God" or "covenant God" or "Friend of His people."

neither "classical" nor "biblical." He saw his role as translator as twofold: first, to understand the original text, then to communicate it in simple, direct modern English.[64]

The monumental translation of the Vulgate "in the light of the Hebrew and Greek originals" by Monsignor Ronald Knox probably marks the last time that one individual will undertake a translation of the entire Bible. A man with incredible mastery of the English language, his New Testament was authorised for use in 1944, his Old Testament in 1954.[65]

J. B. Phillips' *Letters to Young Churches* was published in 1947, and the entire New Testament in 1958. For clarity of thought, vividness of language, and imaginative use of figures, he is rarely equalled and never surpassed."[66] In the Foreword, Phillips give three tests for Biblical translations: 1) the translation must not sound like a translation; 2) the translator's own personality must intrude as little as possible; 3) the translation must produce the same effect in modern readers as the author on his original audience. The translator is not a commentator, but must set down the most likely meaning, paraphrasing when a literal translation of the original would be meaningless in the receptor language. Phillips advocated "reflective digestion" – a process of attempting fully to understand the original text, getting into the mind of the author, so to say, and then communicating that thought it in such a way as to be understood by modern people. This means that knowledge of the original *and* the receptor languages is necessary.

E. V. Rieu disagreed with those (in particular, C. S. Lewis) who held that the Greek New Testament was not a piece of literary art. His translation of the four gospels appeared in the Penguin Classics series in 1953 with no "denominational authority," only

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[64] One idiosyncrasy in his translation is the appearance of Enoch in I Peter 3.19.

[65] He includes the Johannine comma (I John 5) with a note explaining that while the text in question cannot be found in any reliable Greek manuscript, the Latin might be right anyway.

[66] R. G. Bratcher, "Translations" in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* Bruce Metzger and Donald Coogan, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 761.

a desire to show the gospels for the great literature he considered them to be. As such, the meaning, not the idiom of the original was sacred. He maintained the chapters of the text but discarded verse divisions.

In 1928 the ASV was copyrighted to prevent tampering with the text. In 1937 the International Council of Religious Education authorised a revision of the ASV. Thirty-two scholars, headed by Luther A. Weigel worked on the project, publishing the *Revised Standard Version* New Testament in 1946, the Old Testament in 1951, and the Apocrypha in 1957. In 1977 an "expanded" edition containing III and IV Maccabees and Psalm 151 was published.

The RSV was designed for public as well as private use and attempted to stay as close to the Tyndale-KJV tradition as possible, as far as the original languages would allow on the one hand and as modern English would on the other.

The RSV translators took into account the tremendous developments in biblical scholarship since 1881/1901: the discovery of many more papyri and other maunuscripts; the value of modern-language translations; the advances of textual criticism; and the faults in both the ERV and ASV. Nonetheless, the RSV was not a new translation but a revision of the ASV in the tradition of the KJV; changes from the ASV were made for "good reasons" only. The RSV is a modern translation, but perhaps not modern enough. Its chief fault lies in that it addresses a post-war audience in pre-war language.

In 1974 the Policies Committee of the RSV (a standing committeee of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA) authorised the preparation of a revision of the entire RSV. The work of the translation was both ecumenical and international and the resulting translation was published in 1989 under the title of the *New Revised Standard Version*. In the Preface (entitled in KJV style "To the Reader") Bruce Metzger recognises that no translation is perfect nor will any one translation suit all groups of readers. This is evidenced in that

> [during] the years following the publication of the Revised Standard Version, twenty-six other English translations and revisions of the Bible were produced by committees and by individual scholars – not to mention twenty-five other translations and revisions of the New Testament alone.

The NRSV is a translation "as literal as possible, as free as necessary," intended to be used in liturgical settings for public reading, as well as for private devotional reading and study. Apart from the occasional awkward phrase (sometimes caused by its welcome sensitivity to gender inclusivity), the NRSV is an excellent translation that deserves the widespread use it enjoys in many denominations across North America.

Good News for Modern Man, the New Testament of what would ultimately become known as *Today's English Version* or the *Good News Bible* was published by the American Bible Society in September, 1966. Despite its widespread liturgical use it was originally intended for people whose second language was English.

The primary concern of the TEV translators was the faithful transmission of the meaning of the original texts in language that is clear, natural, simple, and unambiguous.[67] No attempt was made to reproduce the characteristics of the original languages in the translation, although poetry was set up to look like poetry.

The *Holy Bible: Contemporary English Version* is a revision of the TEV first published in 1995 (the NT appeared in 1991). It claims to be a "user-friendly" translation, and the only one ever to take into account the needs of both the reader and the listener.

The CEV is a meaning-for-meaning (dynamic equivalent) translation that was guided by the principles derived from Luther and the translators of the KJV, that accuracy of expression must be couched in the common language of the common people. The desired effect was to produce a translation which is thoroughly "English" in style, as

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[67] If only the original texts were always clear, natural, simple, and unambiguous....

opposed to Hebraic or Greek. To achieve this goal, a careful process of translation and editing was utilised:

> The drafts in their earliest stages were sent for review and comment to a number of biblical scholars, theologians, and educators representing a wide variety of church traditions. In addition, drafts were sent for review and comment to all English-speaking Bible Societies and to more than forty United Bible Societies translation consultants around the world. Final approval of the text was given by the American Bible Society Board of Trustees on the recommendation of its Translations Subcommittee.

New American Standard Version New Testament was first published under the aegis of the Lockman Foundation of La Habra, California in 1960. It is a conservative revision of the ASV in contemporary language, which is made clear in the Foreword:

> The New American Standard Bible has been produced with the conviction that the words of Scripture as originally penned in the Hebrew and Greek were inspired by God. Being the eternal Word of God, the Holy Scriptures speak with fresh power to each generation, to give us wisdom that leads to salvation, that we may serve to the glory of Christ.

On September 30, 1943, Pope Pius XII promulgated his encyclical, *Divino afflante spiritu* which authorised Roman Catholic scholars to prepare vernacular translations directly from the Hebrew and Greek texts – *i.e.*, not from the Vulgate. In the encyclical, the Roman Church finally acknowledged the advances of archeology and philology and their importance for biblical studies.

> Moreover there are now such abundant aids to the study of these languages that the biblical scholar, who by neglecting them would deprive himself of access to the original texts, could in no wise escape the stigma of levity and sloth (II.15).

The Jerusalem Bible (1966) is an English version of French original which was published in 1954-55. The English translation was prepared in the light of the original languages but the notes and introductions were translated directly from the French. The translation of יהוה as "Yahweh" is peculiar to this translation.

The New American Bible (1970) was the first English translation by Roman Catholic scholars to be made directly from the original languages. Described by R. G. Bratcher as "a bold step forward"[68] it is an uneven translation because drafts of books were prepared by individual scholars. Its style is modern and formal without resorting to *thee*s and *thou*s and is appropriate to the original Hebrew or Greek, right down to preserving Paul's occasionally tangled grammar.

In 1965 scholars from the Christian Reformed Church and the National [*i.e.*, American] Association of Evangelicals met in Illinois to discuss the need for a new translation of the Bible suitable for both public and private use. The result of this united conservative effort was published in 1973 as the *New International Version* – New Testament, and the entire Bible in 1978. Careful attention was given to the meaning of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek text, as well as to English style, and the translators "sought to preserve some measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English" (from the Preface).

In May 1946 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland called for a new English translation of the Bible,

> inasmuch as the language of the Authorised Version, already archaic when it was made, had become even more definitely archaic and less generally understood (from the NEB preface).

The translation procedure was thus: translators were chosen because of their expertise, not their denominational affiliations. A draft translation of a book or books was prepared by an individual. The draft was circulated in typeset form among the appropriate panel members (OT / NT / Apocrypha) for their consideration. The draft was then discussed verse-by-verse until a consensus was reached. The draft was then sent to the fourth panel of literary advisors, and because

[68] R. G. Bratcher, p. 763.

> sound scholarship does not always carry with it a delicate sense of English style, the Committee appointed a fourth panel, of trusted literary advisors, to whom all the work of the translating panels was to be submitted for scrutiny (from the NEB preface).

Some passages went back and forth many times until they were sent for final approval to a Joint Committee made up of representatives of the participating denominations .

The resulting translation, the *New English Bible: New Testament*, appeared in 1961; the complete Bible, including a revision of the New Testament and providing a translation of the Apocrypha, was published in 1970. The English style is modern and elegant, but occasionally idiosyncratic. According to Geddes MacGregor,[69] the English is not the liturgical language of the Prayer Book, and is a bit too elegant to be called "common." He cites Matthew 26.45-46 as being an example of "incredible" style in which Jesus sounds like an actor in a Shakesperian play![70]

The whole NEB was published with minor corrections in 1972,[71] but as early as 1974 a Joint Commitee of the Churches set in motion a major revison, which would become known as *The Revised English Bible*. The Roman Catholic Church in Britain participated as a full member in the production of the REB as did the Salvation Army, the United Reformed Church and the Moravian Church. This major revision took over fourteen years. Part of the call for revision was that the NEB was not intended for liturgical use:

> ... widespread enthusiasm for The New English Bible had resulted in its being frequently used for reading aloud in public worship, the implications of which had not been fully anticipated by the translators (from the REB Preface).

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[69] MacGreggor, Chapter 32: "The New English Bible."

[70] Then [Jesus] came to his disciples and said to them, "Still sleeping? Still taking your ease? The hour has come! The Son of Man is betrayed to sinful men. Up, let us go forward; the traitor is upon us."

[71] The translations of 1970 *versus* 1972 of Judges 1.14 is an example of a radical departure from the traditional understanding of the MT later being revised.

The REB is a fluent translation standing in the NEB tradition, suitably dignified for liturgical use and intelligible to a wide range of readers. Complex, technical terms were avoided and inclusive language was used where possible "without compromising scholarly integrity or English style."

Incipit evangelium secundum mattheum

XPI AUTEM GENERATIO SIC ERAT CUM ESSET DESPONSATA MATER EIUS MARIA IOSEPH

Chapter 4: Some Translations

A note on methodology

What follows is a verse-by-verse comparison of Matthew 5.1-12 from about thirty English translations spanning a thousand years. The choice of translations presented here is an attempt to be representative of both historical and theological considerations, but this choice has been – of necessity – selective, and has been limited by three factors: *awareness* (some translations have doubtless been overlooked due to ignorance), *availability* (some translations would be interesting to compare [*e.g.*, Edward Harwood might prove entertaining if not instructive] but have defied location), and *significance* (some translations are not represented because they fall too far outside the larger, "mainstream" tradition of English Bible translation [*e.g.*, New World Translation, Living Bible, Lasma Bible, the Emphasised New Testament]).

Matthew 5.1-2: Introduction

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)

> geseh putotlice *th*reatas gestag in mor & mi*th* *th*y gesaett geneoieccedon to him *th*eignas his
>
> & untynde mu*th* gelærde hea cueo*th*

Wyclif (1382)

> Jhesus forsothe, seyinge cumpanyes, went vp in to an hill; and when he hadde sete, his disciplis camen niȝe to hym.
>
> And he, openynge his mouthe, tauȝte to hem, sayinge,

Tyndale (1526)

> When he sawe the people, he went vp into a mountayne; and when he was set, his disciples cam vnto hym. And he openned his mought, and taught them, saynge:

Tyndale (1534)

> When he sawe the people, he went vp into a mountayne, and when he was set, his diciples came to hym, and he opened hys mouthe, and taught them sayinge:

Coverdale (1536)

> When he sawe the people, he went vp into a mountayne: and when he was set, his disciples came to hym, and he opened his mouth, and taught them, sayinge:

Taverner (1539)

When he sawe the people, he went vp into a mountayne, and when he was set, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth, and taught them, sayenge:

Great Bible (1539)

When he sawe the people, he went up into a mountayne, and when he was sett, hys discyples came to him: and after that he had opened hys mouth, he taught them, sayinge:

Geneva (1560)

And when he sawe the multitudes, he went vp into a mountaine: and when he was set, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouthe and taught them, saying,

Bishops' (1568)

When he sawe the multitude, he went vp into a mountaine: and when he was set his disciples came to him.

And when he had opened his mouth, hee taught them, saying,

Rheims NT (1582)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountaine, and when he was set down, his Disciples came unto him, and opening his mouth he taught them, saying.

King James' Version (1611)

And seeing the multitudes, he went vp into a mountaine: and when he was set, his disciples came vnto him.

And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

John Wesley (1755)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain; and when he was sat down his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

Noah Webster (1833)

And seeing the multitudes, he ascended a mountain: and when he was seated, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

English Revised NT (1881)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

American Standard Version (1901)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

Weymouth (1902)

Seeing the multitude of people, Jesus went up on to the hill. There he seated himself, and when his disciples came to him, he proceeded to teach them, and said:

Moffatt NT (1913)

So when he saw the crowds, he went up the hill and sat down; his disciples came up to him and opening his lips he began to teach them. He said:

Goodspeed (1923)

When he saw the crowds of people he went up on the mountain. There he seated himself, and when his disciples had come up to him, he opened his lips to teach them. And he said,

Knox NT (1944)

Jesus, when he saw how great was their number, went up on to the mountainside; there he sat down, and his disciples came about him. And he began speaking to them; this was the teaching he gave.

RSV (1946)

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

Phillips NT (1958)

When Jesus saw the vast crowds he went up the hillside, and after he had sat down his disciples came to him.

Then he began his teaching by saying to them:

Rieu (1953)

Seeing the crowds, he went up into the hills. There he sat down and his disciples gathered round him. Then he began to speak and taught them in these words:

NEB NT (1961)

When he saw the crowds, he went up the hill. 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:

NASV (1963)

And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And opening His mouth He *began* to teach them, saying,

Good News NT (1966)

Jesus saw the crowds and went up a hill, where he sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them:

Jerusalem Bible (1966)

Seeing the crowds, he went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

NAB (1970)

When he saw the crowds he went up on the mountainside. After he had sat down his disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them:

NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)

When he saw the crowds he went up the hill. 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:

NIV (1973)

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:

NRSV (1989)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

REB (1989)

When he saw the crowds he went up a mountain. There he sat down, and when his disciples had gathered round him he began to address them. And this is the teaching he gave:

CEV (1995)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the side of a mountain and sat down. Jesus' disciples gathered around him, and he taught them:

Matthew 5.3: The Poor in Spirit

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)

eadge bi*th th*orfendo of ɫ fró gaste f'*th*on hiora is ric heofna

Wyclif (1382)

Blessid *be* the pore in spirit, for the kingdam in heuenes is heren.

Tyndale (1526)

Blessed are the poore in sprete: for theirs is the kyngdome off heven.

Tyndale (1534)

Blessed are the povre in sprete: for theirs is the kyngdome of heven.

Coverdale (1536)

Blessed are the poore in sprete: for theirs is the kyngdome of heuen.

Taverner (1539)

blessed are the poore in spiryt, for theirs is the kyngdome of heauen.

Great Bible (1539)

Blessed are the poore in sprete, for theyrs is the kyngdome of heaven.

Geneva (1560)

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdome of heauen.

Bishops' (1568)

Blessed *are* the poore in spirite: for theirs is the kingdome of heauen.

Rheims NT (1582)

Blessed are the poore in Spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

King James' Version (1611)

Blessed *are* the poore in spirit: for theirs is the kingdome of heauen.

John Wesley (1755)

Happy *are* the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Noah Webster (1833)

Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

English Revised NT (1881)

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

American Standard Version (1901)

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Weymouth (1902)

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for to them belongs the kingdom of heaven.

Moffatt NT (1913)
Blessed are those who feel poor in spirit!
the Realm of heaven is theirs.
Goodspeed (1923)
Blessed are those who feel their spiritual need, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!
Knox NT (1944)
Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
RSV (1946)
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Phillips NT (1958)
How happy are the humble-minded, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs!
Rieu (1953)
Happy the poor in spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
NEB NT (1961)
How blest are those who know that they are poor;
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
NASV (1963)
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Good News NT (1966)
Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor;
the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!
Jerusalem Bible (1966)
How happy are the poor in spirit;
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
NAB (1970)
How blest are the poor in spirit; the reign of God is theirs.
NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
How blest are those who know their need of God;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
NIV (1973)
Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
NRSV (1989)
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
REB (1989)
Blessed are the poor in spirit;
the kingdom of heaven is theirs.
CEV (1995)
God blesses those people who depend only on him.
They belong to the kingdom of heaven!

Matthew 5.4: The Mourners

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century) (= verse 5)
　　eadge bi*th*on *th*a *th*e gemænas nú f'*th*on *th*a gefroefred bi*th*on
Wyclif (= verse 5) (1382)
　　Blessid *be* thei that mournen, for thei shuln be comfortid.
Tyndale (1526)
　　Blessed are they that morne: for they shalbe conforted.
Tyndale (1534)
　　Blessed are they that morne: for they shalbe conforted.
Coverdale (1536)
　　Blessed are they that mourn: for they shalbe comforted.
Taverner (1539)
　　Blesed are they that morne: for they shalbe conforted.
Great Bible (1539)
　　Blessed are they that mourne, for they shall receave comfort.
Geneva (1560)
　　Blessed *are* they that mourne: for they shalbe comforted.
Bishops' (1568)
　　Blessed *are* they that mourne: for they shall be comforted.
Rheims NT (1582) (= verse 5)
　　Blessed are they that mourne: for they shal be comforted
King James' Version (1611)
　　Blessed *are* they that mourne: for they shall be comforted.
John Wesley (1755)
　　Happy *are* they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.
Noah Webster (1833)
　　Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
English Revised NT (1881)
　　Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
American Standard Version (1901)
　　Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
Weymouth (1902)
　　Blessed are the mourners, for they shall be comforted.
Moffatt NT (1913)
　　Blessed are the mourners!
　　they will be consoled
Goodspeed (1923)
　　Blessed are the mourners, for they will be consoled!
Knox NT (= verse 5) (1944)
　　Blessed are those who mourn; they shall be comforted.
RSV (1946)
　　Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Phillips NT (1958)
    How happy are those who know what sorrow means, for they will be given courage and comfort!
Rieu (1953)
    Happy those that mourn; for they shall be comforted.
NEB NT (1961)
    How blest are the sorrowful;
    they shall find consolation.
NASV (1963)
    Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Good News NT (1966)
    Happy are those who mourn;
    God will comfort them!
Jerusalem Bible (= verse 5) (1966)
    Happy those who mourn:
    they shall be comforted.
NAB (1970)
    Blest too are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled.
NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
    How blest are the sorrowful;
    they shall find consolation.
NIV (1973)
    Blessed are those who mourn,
    for they will be comforted.
NRSV (1989)
    Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
REB (1989)
    Blessed are the sorrowful;
    they shall find consolation.
CEV (1995)
    God blesses those people who grieve.
    They will find comfort!

Matthew 5.5: The Meek

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century) (= verse 4)
    eadge bi*th*on *th*a milde f' *th*on *th*a agnega*th* eor*th*o
Wyclif (1382) (= verse 4)
    Blessid *be* mylde *men*, for thei shuln welde the eerthe.
Tyndale (1526)
    Blessed are the meke: for they shall inheret the earth.
Tyndale (1534)
    Blessed are the meke: for they shall inheret the earth.
Coverdale (1536)
    Blessed are the meke: for they shall inheret the earth.

Taverner (1539)
Blessed are the meke: for they shal enheret the erth.
Great Bible (1539)
Blessed are the meke: for they shall receave the enheritaunce of the earth.
Geneva (1560)
Blessed *are* the meke: for they shal inherite the earth.
Bishops' (1568)
Blessed *are* the meeke: for they shall inherite the earth.
Rheims NT (1582) (= verse 4)
Blessed are the meeke: for they shal possesse the land.
King James' Version (1611)
Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
John Wesley (1755)
Happy *are* the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.
Noah Webster (1833)
Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the land.
English Revised NT (1881)
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
American Standard Version (1901)
Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
Weymouth (1902)
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Moffatt NT (1913)
Blessed are the humble!
they will inherit the earth.
Goodspeed (1923)
Blessed are the humble-minded, for they will possess the land!
Knox NT (= verse 4) (1944)
Blessed are the patient; they shall inherit the land.
RSV (1946)
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Phillips NT (1958)
Happy are those who claim nothing, for the whole earth will belong to them!
Rieu (1953)
Happy the gentle; for they shall inherit the earth.
NEB NT (1961)
How blest are those of a gentle spirit;
they shall have the earth for their possession.
NASV (1963)
Blessed are the humble, for they shall inherit the earth.
Good News NT (1966)
Happy are the meek;
they will receive what God has promised!

Jerusalem Bible (= verse 4) (1966)
Happy the gentle:
they shall have the earth for their heritage.
NAB (1970)
[Blest are the lowly; they shall inherit the land.]
NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
How blest are those of a gentle spirit;
they shall have the earth for their possession.
NIV (1973)
Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
NRSV (1989)
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
REB (1989)
Blessed are the gentle;
for they shall have the earth for their possession.
CEV (1995)
God blesses those people who are humble.
The earth will belong to them!

Matthew 5.6: Seekers after Righteousness

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)
eadge bi*th*on *th*a *th*e hynegra*th* & *th*yrstas so*th*fæstnisse for*th*on *th*a ilco gefylled bi*th*on ł geriorde*th*
Wyclif (1382)
Blessid *be* thei that hungren and thirsten riȝtwisnesse, for thei shuln ben fulfillid.
Tyndale (1526)
Blessed are they which honger and thurst for rightewesnes: for they shalbe filled.
Tyndale (1534)
Blessed are they which honger and thurst for rightewesnes: for they shalbe filled.
Coverdale (1536)
Blessed are they which honger and thyrst for rightewesnes: for they shalbe filled.
Taverner (1539)
Blessed are they, which honger & thurst for ryghtwysnes: for they shalbe fylled.
Great Bible (1539)
Blessed are they which honger and thyrst after ryghteousness: for they shalbe satisfyed.
Geneva (1560)
Blessed *are* they which honger & thirst for righteousness: for they shal be filled.
Bishops' (1568)
Blessed *are* they which doe hunger and thirst after righteousnesse: for they shalbe satisfied.
Rheims NT (1582)
Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shal have their fil.

King James' Version (1611)

Blessed *are* they which doe hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

John Wesley (1755)

Happy *are* they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be satisfied.

Noah Webster (1833)

Blessed *are* they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled.

English Revised NT (1881)

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

American Standard Version (1901)

Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Weymouth (1902)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be completely satisfied.

Moffatt NT (1913)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for goodness!
they will be satisfied.

Goodspeed (1923)

Blessed are those who are hungry and thirst for uprightness, for they will be satisfied.

Knox NT (1944)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.

RSV (1946)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Phillips NT (1958)

Happy are those who are hungry and thirsty for goodness, for they will be fully satisfied!

Rieu (1953)

Happy those that hunger and thirst for righteousness; for they shall be satisfied.

NEB NT (1961)

How blest are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail;
they shall be satisfied.

NASV (1963)

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Good News NT (1966)

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires;
God will satisfy them fully!

Jerusalem Bible (1966)

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:
they shall be satisfied.

NAB (1970)

Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.

NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
How blest are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail;
they shall be satisfied.
NIV (1973)
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.
NRSV (1989)
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
REB (1989)
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail;
they shall be satisfied.
CEV (1995)
God blesses those people who want to obey him more than to eat or drink.
They will be given what they want!

Matthew 5.7: The Merciful

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)
eadge bi*th*on miltheorte f'*th*on hiora ł *th*a miltheornise him gefylges
Wyclif (1382)
Blessid *be* mercyful *men*, for thei shuln gete mercye.
Tyndale (1526)
Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obteyne mercy.
Tyndale (1534)
Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obteyne mercy.
Coverdale (1536)
Blessed are the mercifull: for they shall obteyne mercy.
Taverner (1539)
Blessed are the mercyfull: for they shall receyue mercy.
Great Bible (1539)
Blessed are the mercyful: for they shall obteyne mercy.
Geneva (1560)
Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shal obteine mercy.
Bishops' (1568)
Blessed *are* the mercifull: for they shall obtain mercie.
Rheims NT (1582)
Blessed are the merciful: for they shal obtayne mercie.
King James' Version (1611)
Blessed *are* the mercifull: for they shall obtaine mercie.
John Wesley (1755)
Happy *are* the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.
Noah Webster (1833)
Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
English Revised NT (1881)
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

American Standard Version (1901)
Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
Weymouth (1902)
Blessed are the compassionate, for they shail receive compassion.
Moffatt NT (1913)
Blessed are the merciful!
they will find mercy.
Goodspeed (1923)
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy!
Knox NT (1944)
Blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy.
RSV (1946)
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Phillips NT (1958)
Happy are the merciful, for they will have mercy shown to them!
Rieu (1953)
Happy those that show mercy; for mercy shall be shown to them.
NEB NT (1961)
How blest are those who show mercy;
mercy shall be shown to them.
NASV (1963)
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
Good News NT (1966)
Happy are those who are merciful to others;
God will be merciful to them!
Jerusalem Bible (1966)
Happy the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them.
NAB (1970)
Blest are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.
NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
How blest are those who show mercy;
mercy shall be shown to them.
NIV (1973)
Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.
NRSV (1989)
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
REB (1989)
Blessed are those who show mercy;
mercy shall be shown to them.
CEV (1995)
God blesses those people who are merciful.
They will be treated with mercy!

Matthew 5.8: The Pure in Heart

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)
　　eadge bi*th*on claene of ł fró hearte for*th*on *th*a god geseas
Wyclif (1382)
　　Blessid *be* thei that ben of clene herte, for thei shuln see God.
Tyndale (1526)
　　Blessed are the pure in herte: for they shall se God.
Tyndale (1534)
　　Blessed are the pure in herte: for they shall se God.
Coverdale (1536)
　　Blessed are the pure in herte: for they shall se God.
Taverner (1539)
　　Blessed are the pure in hert: for they shall se God.
Great Bible (1539)
　　Blessed are the pure in herte: for they shall se God.
Geneva (1560)
　　Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shal se God.
Bishops' (1568)
　　Blessed *are* ye pure in hart: for they shal see God.
Rheims NT (1582)
　　Blessed are the cleane of hart: they shal see God.
King James' Version (1611)
　　Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
John Wesley (1755)
　　Happy *are* the pure in heart; for they shall see God.
Noah Webster (1833)
　　Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
English Revised NT (1881)
　　Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
American Standard Version (1901)
　　Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
Weymouth (1902)
　　Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Moffatt NT (1913)
　　Blessed are the pure in heart!
　　they will see God.
Goodspeed (1923)
　　Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God!
Knox NT (1944)
　　Blessed are the clean of heart; they shall see God.
RSV (1946)
　　Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Phillips NT (1958)
　　Happy are the utterly sincere, for they will see God!

Rieu (1953)
Happy the pure in heart; for they shall see God.
NEB NT (1961)
How blest are those whose hearts are pure;
they shall see God.
NASV (1963)
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Good News NT (1966)
Happy are the pure in heart;
they will see God!
Jerusalem Bible (1966)
Happy the pure in heart:
they shall see God.
NAB (1970)
Blest are the single-hearted for they shall see God.
NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
How blest are those whose hearts are pure;
they shall see God.
NIV (1973)
Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
NRSV (1989)
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
REB (1989)
Blessed are those whose hearts are pure;
they shall see God.
CEV (1995)
God blesses those people whose hearts are pure.
They will see him!

Matthew 5.9: The Peacemakers

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)
eadge bi*th*on sibsume ł fri*th*georne for*th*on *th*a suna godes geceigd bi*th*on genemned
Wyclif (1382)
Blessid *be* pesible *men*, for thei shuln be clepid the sonys of God.
Tyndale (1526)
Blessed are the maynteyners of peace: for they shalbe called the chyldren of God.
Tyndale (1534)
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shalbe called the chyldren of God.
Coverdale (1536)
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shalbe caled the chyldren of God.
Taverner (1539)
Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shalbe called the children of God.

Great Bible (1539)

Blessed are the peace makers: for they shalbe called the children of God.

Geneva (1560)

Blessed *are* the peace makers: for they shalbe called the children of God.

Bishops' (1568)

Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shalbe called the children of God.

Rheims NT (1582)

Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shal be called the children of God.

King James' Version (1611)

Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall bee called the children of God.

John Wesley (1755)

Happy *are* the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.

Noah Webster (1833)

Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.

English Revised NT (1881)

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

American Standard Version (1901)

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

Weymouth (1902)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be acknowledged as sons of God.

Moffatt NT (1913)

Blessed are the peacemakers!
they shall be ranked sons of God.

Goodspeed (1923)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called God's sons!

Knox NT (1944)

Blessed are the peace-makers; they shall be counted the children of God.

RSV (1946)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Phillips NT (1958)

Happy are those who make peace, for they will be known as sons of God!

Rieu (1953)

Happy the peace-makers; for they shall be called sons of God.

NEB NT (1961)

How blest are the peacemakers;
God shall call them his sons.

NASV (1963)

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Good News NT (1966)

Happy are those who work for peace among men;
God will call them his sons!

Jerusalem Bible (1966)

Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called sons of God.

NAB (1970)
Blest too the peacemakers; they shall be called sons of God.
NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
How blest are the peacemakers;
God shall call them his sons.
NIV (1973)
Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.
NRSV (1989)
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
REB (1989)
Blessed are the peacemakers;
they shall be called God's children.
CEV (1995)
God blesses those people who make peace.
They will be called his children!

Matthew 5.10: The Persecuted

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)
eadge bi*th*on *th*a *th*e oehtnisse has ge*th*olas fore so*th*fæstnisse for*th*on hiora is ric heofna
Wyclif (1382)
Blessid *be* thei that suffren persecucioun for riȝtwisnesse, for the kyngdam of heuenes is herun.
Tyndale (1526)
Blessed are they which suffre persecucion for rightewesnes sake: for theirs ys they kyngdome off heven.
Tyndale (1534)
Blessed are they which suffre persecucion for rightewesnes sake: for theirs ys they kyngdome of heuen.
Coverdale (1536)
Blessed are they which suffre persecucion for rightwesnes sake: for theirs is the kyngdome of heuen.
Taverner (1539)
Blessed are they which be pursued for rightwysnes: for theirs is the kyngdome of heuen.
Great Bible (1539)
Blessed are they which suffre persecucyon for righteousnes sake: for theirs is the kingdome of heaven.
Geneva (1560)
Blessed *are* they which suffer persecution for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdome of heauen.

Bishops' (1568)

Blessed *are* they which haue bene persecuted for righteousnesse sake: for theirs is the kingdome of heuen.

Rheims NT (1582)

Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice: for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

King James' Version (1611)

Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousnesse sake: for theirs is the kingdome of heauen.

John Wesley (1755)

Happy *are* they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Noah Webster (1833)

Blessed *are* they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

English Revised NT (1881)

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

American Standard Version (1901)

Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Weymouth (1902)

Blessed are those who have borne persecution in the cause of righteousness, for to them belongs the Kingdom of heaven.

Moffatt NT (1913)

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of goodness!
the Realm of heaven is theirs.

Goodspeed (1923)

Blessed are those who have endured persecution for their uprightness, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to them!

Knox NT (1944)

Blessed are those who suffer persecution in the cause of right; the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

RSV (1946)

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Phillips NT (1958)

Happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Rieu (1953)

Happy those that have been persecuted for righteousness; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

NEB NT (1961)

How blest are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of right;
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

NASV (1963)
Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Good News NT (1966)
Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires;
the Kingdom of heaven belongs to them!
Jerusalem Bible (1966)
Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
NAB (1970)
Blest are those persecuted for holiness' sake; the reign of God is theirs.
NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)
How blest are those who have suffered persecution in the cause of right;
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
NIV (1973)
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
NRSV (1989)
Blessed are those who are persecuted righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven
REB (1989)
Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right;
the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.
CEV (1995)
God blesses those people who are treated badly for doing right.
They belong to the kingdom of heaven!

Matthew 5.11-12: The Reviled

Lindisfarne (mid-10th century)
eadge aron gie mi*th th*y yfle hia gecuoe*th*as iuh & mi*th th*y oehtas iuih & cuoe*th*as eghpelc yfel pi*th* iuih gesuicas ꝉ pæges f'e mec
gefea*th* & pynnsumia*th* for*th*on mearda ieura monigfalde is ꝉ sint in heofnum soæ ꝉ suelce ec for*th*on geoehton *th*a pitgo *th*a *th*e peron aer iuhi
Wyclif (1382)
*3*ee shulen be blessid, when men shulen curse ȝou, and shulen pursue ȝou, and shulen say al yuel aȝeins ȝou leeȝing, for me.
Ioye ȝee with yn forth, and glade ȝee with out forth, for ȝoure meede is plenteuouse in heuenes; forsothe so thei han pursued the prophetis that weren before ȝou.
Tyndale (1526)
Blessed are ye, when men shall revyle you, and persecute you, and shall falsly say all manner of yvell saynges agaysnt you, ffor my sake. Reioyce, and be glad, for greate is youre rewarde in heven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before youre dayes.

Tyndale (1534)

Blessed are ye, when men shall reuyle you, and persecute you, and shall falsly say all manner of yvell saynges agaysnt you, for my sake. Reioyce, and be glad, for greate is youre rewarde in heven; for so persecuted they the Prophetes which were before youre dayes.

Coverdale (1536)

Blessed are ye when men reuyle you, and persecute you, and falsly say all manner of yuell saynges against you for my sake. Reioyce and be glad, for greate is yuoure revarde in heuen.

For so they persecuted the prophetes which were before youre dayes.

Taverner (1539)

Blessed are ye when men reuyle you, and pursue you, , and falsely speake all euyll synges agaynste you for my sake. Reioyce and be glad, for great is youre rewarde in heuen. ✠ For so pursued they the Prophetes before you.

Great Bible (1539)

Blessed are ye, when men revyle you, and persecute you, and shall falesy say all maner of evyll sayinge against you, for my sake. Rejoyse and be glad for greate is your rewarde in heven. For so persecuted they the prophetes, which were before you.

Geneva (1560)

Blessed are ye when men reuile you, and persecute *you*, and say all maner of euil against you for my sake, falsely.

Reioyce and be glad, for great is your rewarde in heauen: for so persecuted they the Prophetes which were before you.

Bishops' (1568)

Blessed are ye when *men* shall reuile you, and persecute *you*, and lying shal say al maner of euil saying against you for my sake.

Reioyce ye and be glad, for great is your reward in heuen. For so persecuted they the Prophetes, which were before you.

Rheims NT (1582)

Blessed are ye when they shal revile you, and persecute you, and speake al that naught is against you, untruely, for my sake: be glad and rejoyce, for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the Prophets, that were before you.

King James' Version (1611)

Blessed *are* ye, when men shall reuile you, and persecute you, and shal say all manner of euill against you falsly for my sake.

Reioyce, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heauen: For so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.

John Wesley (1755)

Happy are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner oif evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.

Noah Webster (1833)

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

English Revised NT (1881)

Blessed are ye when *men* shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

American Standard Version (1901)

Blessed are ye when *men* shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.

Weymouth (1902)

Blessed are you when they have insulted and persecuted you, and have said every cruel thing about you falsely for my sake. Be joyful and triumphant, because your reward is great in heaven; for so were the prophets before you persecuted.

Moffatt NT (1913)

Blessed are you when men denounce you and persecute you and utter all manner of evil against you for my sake; rejoice and exult in it, for your reward is rich in heaven; that is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

Goodspeed (1923)

Blessed are you when people abuse you, and persecute you, and falsely say everything bad of you, on my account. Be glad and exult over it, for you will be richly rewarded in heaven, for that is the way they persecuted the prophets who were before you!

Knox NT (1944)

Blessed are you, when men revile you, and persecute you, , and speak all manner of evil against you falsely, because of me. Be glad and light-hearted, for a rich reward awaits you in heaven; so it was they persecuted the prophets who went before you.

RSV (1946)

Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Phillips NT (1958)

And what happiness will be yours when people blame you and ill-treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake! Be glad then, yes, be tremendously glad – for your reward in heaven is magnificent. They persecuted the prophets before your time in exactly the same way.

Rieu (1953)

Count yourselves happy when the time comes for people to revile you and maltreat you and utter every kind of calumny against you on account of me.

Rejoice and glory in these things, since your reward is great in Heaven. Was it not thus that they persecuted the Prophets before you?

NEB NT (1961)

How blest are you, when you suffer insults and persecution 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.

NASV (1963)

Blessed are you when *men* revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Good News NT (1966)

Happy are you when men insult you, and persecute you, and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are my followers. Be glad and happy, because a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how men persecuted the prophets who lived before you.

Jerusalem Bible (1966)

Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

NAB (1970)

Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me.
Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven.;
they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.

NEB NT 2nd ed (1970)

How blest you are, when you suffer insults and persecution 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.

NIV (1973)

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

NRSV (1989)

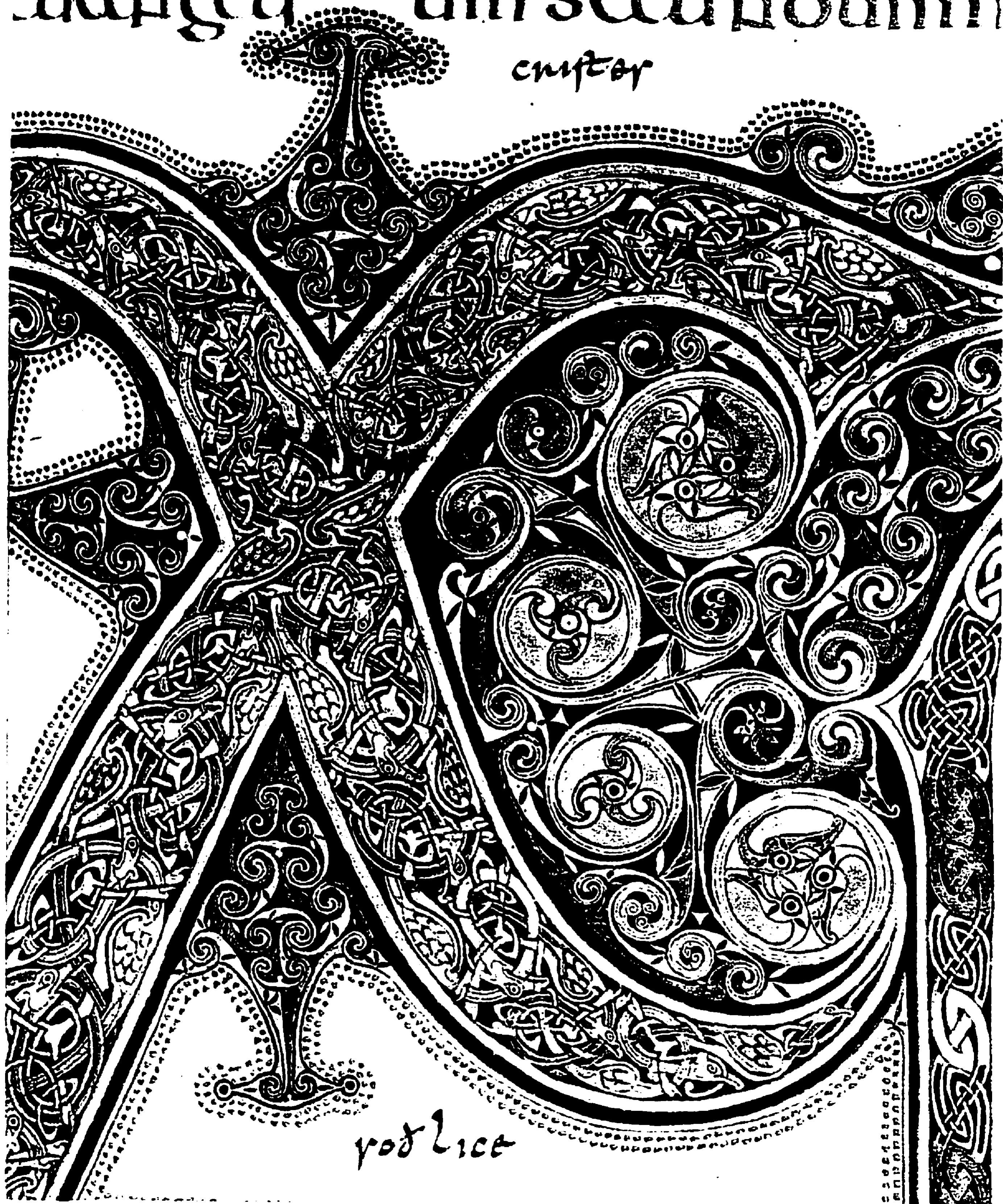
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

REB (1989)

Blessed are you, when you suffer insults and persecution and calumnies of every kind for my sake. Exult and be glad, for you have a rich reward in heaven; in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.

CEV (1995)

God will bless you when people insult you, mistreat you, and tell all kinds of evil lies about you because of me. Be happy and excited! You will have a great reward in heaven. People did these same things to the prophets who lived long ago.


godspell
æft
euangelium secundum
cristes
soðlice

Chapter 5: Observations

Perhaps it is wise to acknowledge that the conclusions to be drawn (or the observations to be made) from a study of this sort need to be tentative rather than attempting to be definitive. After all, in 1962 the great scholar C. H. Dodd predicted that the RSV would "likely … be the last (as it is the freest and best) of the attempts to bring the 'Tyndale - King James tradition' up-to-date while preserving the time honoured pattern of structure and language."[1] The RSV has since then, of course, been revised, and there is every indication that in another generation there will be the need for the NRSV to undergo a similar process. The same may be said of the NEB / REB tradition. The absence of any great changes in English translations of the Beatitudes over a period of more than 600 years is itself significant. Even with the highly evolved state of the English language, the most recent translations have in some places reverted to turns-of-phrase that are hundreds of years old.

What follow are some observations regarding translation in general, and some suggested criteria for evaluating various versions. Evaluations are *not* offered here. That sort of decision is beyond the scope of this present study and must be worked out within the context of each individual community that uses the Scriptures, be that a congregation, university class, a Bible-study, a Sunday School, *etc.*, with special regard for that community's level of literacy, theological stance, as well as any other possible considerations.

I. Language and Theology

The Bible may be engaged in many different ways: as history, as story, as mythology, as a library of different types of literature, as anthropology, and as theology –

[1] C. H. Dodd, "Eight English Versions of the New Testament" *The Expository Times* 73 (1962), p. 356.

to name but a few. No matter how it is engaged, as human literary work or divine oracle, there can be no entirely unbiased approach to the study of the Bible. This is especially true of the work of Bible translators.

Translation of the Bible is either the work of a church (*e.g.*, the original impetus for the NEB came from the Church of Scotland; Knox's translation and the Jerusalem Bible were both mandated by the Vatican, *etc.*), or a church-supported body (*e.g.*, the Bible Societies), or an individual (Rieu, Moffatt, Phillips, Weymouth, *et. al.*). It is therefore almost inevitable that the theology of the translators will in some way influence the translation.[2]

Hebrew and Aramaic are small, pictorial languages. The *Koine* Greek of the New Testament is a much larger and highly inflected language capable of greater precision than the Semitic languages. English is still a much larger language, with a huge vocabulary capable of even greater precision and finer shades of meaning than *Koine* Greek. This possibility of precision creates a difficulty for the translator who must render into a large, modern language (*i.e.*, English) teaching recorded in Greek with a precision already greater than that of the Aramaic (oral) original. Difficult choices need to be made, and sometimes other possible renderings of the original text will be supplied in footnotes. These decisions are guided not only by recourse to dictionaries and lexica, but are, in part, either consciously or unconsciously, directed by the theological assumptions of the translators.

Admittedly, within the text of the Matthean beatitudes, there is little in the Greek text that will need to be translated with a theological position in mind. Nonetheless, in

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[2] Rieu claimed that his translation was free from a theological agenda, but such supposed freedom from theology is in itself an agenda that has theological significance. The translators of the NEB were selected for their scholarship, not their denominational allegiance, yet the theological suppositions of men such as Sir Godfrey Driver made themselves felt (in Driver's case, in the Old Testament). Further, despite the ecumenical/scholarly approach of the NEB translation process, the Roman Church originally declined to participate, thus making the NEB a "Protestant" translation.

the very first verse there is a Greek phrase, εἰς τὸ ὄρος, the translation of which will be determined by the translator's theological understanding of the historicity of the events described in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.

Did Jesus go "up *a* mountain" or "up *the* mountain" or "up a hill" or "into the hills"? The difference between the indefinite and definite articles is significant, as, in determining the translation, questions such as these need to be asked:

- Was there one particular ("the") mountain associated with Jesus' teaching?
- If no particular mountain can be identified as the location of the giving of the Sermon on the Mount , then is it best to leave the article indefinite or saying he went "into the hilis"?
- If the Sermon on the Mount is seen not as a single event but as a literary creation of Matthew, then does it matter if it was a hill or a mountain (if the size is theologically significant) or into the hill-country in general?

As mentioned above, there is little in the Beatitudes that needs to be translated with a firm theological position in mind. However, that is not the case with all of the Bible, or even just the New Testament, and the theological weight of (English) words must be considered carefully when a translation is being prepared for either scholarly or liturgical use. The translator must remember that Thomas More's objection to Tyndale's New Testament was largely based on six words. Tyndale had used "congregation" rather than "church," "senior" rather than "priest," "love" rather than "charity," "favour" rather than "grace", "witnessing" rather than "confessing," and "repentance" rather than "penance." The political and ecclesiological implications of these six words contributed to his martyrdom.

II. Tradition and Translation – "Intertext"

The *New Revised Standard Version* (1989), which is a translation used by many churches, renders Matthew 3.18-19 in this way:

> As he [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea – for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

The translation is accurate; it is even quite traditional in its use of "And" to begin the second sentence. But, when read from a pulpit, it falls flat because what the listener expects to hear is "fishers of *men*," not "fish for people." It is necessary here to pass over the question of inclusive language ("people" *is* a more inclusive word than "men"), but the language is inclusive at the expense of the poetic symmetry of older translations and the expectations of the hearers.[3] "Fish for people" (or "fishers of people") sounds strange – the ear expects something different. The traditional "fishers of men" has taken on a life of its own, apart from the biblical text, as have Biblical phrases such as "the eleventh hour" or "hewers of wood and drawers of water" or "the valley of the shadow of death."[4]

The conflict between a text (be it a biblical translation or otherwise) and the expectations of the reader / hearer is a phenomenon described by literary theorists as "intertext." The basic premise is that:

> no text can be read outside of its relationship to other, already extant texts. Neither the text nor its reader can escape this intertextual web of

[3] Most unexpected turns of phrase sound stranger when read aloud than when read to one's self.

[4] Biblical texts are more often poetic than prosaic in form, in that the content cannot easily be separated from the form. When poetry is translated too closely or is divorced from the poetic medium, it ceases to be poetry and becomes prose. Poetic texts are more open to interpretation than prose texts, and when a translation ceases to be poetic and attempts to communicate the meaning of the original in an unambiguous fashion, interpretational (and homiletical) possibilities are restricted. It is in this regard that the KJV endures as the English translation *par excellence*. Many of these poetic expressions have entered the language *via* the KJV and it is to these poetic renderings that some modern translations have returned. For more on how the KJV has exerted a tremendous influence on English literature and helped shape the development of the English language, see Robert McCrum, William Cran, and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English* (New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books – Viking, 1986), pp. 91, 109, 110-5, 144-5, 203.

> relationships that causes the reader to have certain expectations about both the form and the content of the works he or she is reading.[5]

The first beatitude illustrates this point. In 1961, the first edition of the *New English Bible* translated Matthew 5.3 as:

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

This translation limited the meaning of the beatitude in the direction of physical need and economic poverty. Thus, nine years later, in the second edition of the NEB NT, it was emended to:

> How blest are those who know their need of God;
> the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

This translation is as accurate a rendering as one will find in English, but is nuanced too far in the other direction: whereas the 1961 NEB NT translation was too economic in outlook, the 1970 rendering is too "spiritual." In 1989, the *Revised English Bible* returned to a traditional rendering as old as Wyclif's:

> Blessed are the poor in spirit;
> the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

This translation is both traditional and literal, but is not immediately understandable. The meaning of the phrase "the poor in spirit" is obscure in both Greek and English, but shows that it is not possible to overcome the influence of tradition in translation. The traditional phrase has a "weight" of its own because it has given rise to many interpretations – scholarly and homiletical – over the years.

A further example of intertext in the Beatitudes is found in Matthew 5.9. Wyclif translated the Vulgate *pacifici* "pesible men" and Tyndale's 1526 translation renders the

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[5] "Intertextuality." *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism.* Joseph Childers and Gary Hentze, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 159; *cf* "Intertextuality" in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory.* I. R. Makaryk, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), pp. 568-571: "...a text is not a self-sufficient, closed system..." (p. 568).

Greek εἰρηνοποιοί "maynteyners of peace." Since that time, and with only one exception (GNB NT), Tyndale's 1534 translation of εἰρηνοποιοί as "peacemakers" has been retained in all translations to the present day.

Another remarkable feature of the various translations of the beatitudes is that whereas in English the normal word order is subject - verb - object, from Wyclif and Tyndale to the present day, the beatitudes have been translated into English with the adjective, "Blessed" (or equivalent) at the beginning of the sentence, just as in the Greek (μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοί...) and Latin (*beati pauperes*...). A more natural word order in English might be, "The poor in spirit are blessed, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs" "Mourners are blessed, because they will be comforted," but the weight of tradition and usage predisposes translators to a more classical word order.

III. Continuity of Language

The English language is in a constant state of growth and change. At one time, "prevent" meant to "go before;" but now its meaning is radically different. The same is true of the words "let," "wise," and "awful." The vocabulary of the computer age has contributed several new *quasi*-verbs to the language: to format, to interface, *etc.* English, like any living language, has the ability both to absorb words from other languages and to change the meanings of existing words. The Norman conquest of England in the eleventh century is often seen as a turning point in the development of the English language, but the influence of the French has probably been overestimated:

> But, while French influence so proudly predominated at the court, in towns, and wherever the Norman grandees in the church, the state, and the army had sway, the people clung to their own speech. The situation favoured the success of this popular conservatism. The lower classes, serfs, herdsmen, tillers of the earth, "hewers of wood and drawers of water," suffered little by the Conquest. What befell them was simply a change of masters. They lived on the soil as in former times, and were contented to speak the tongue which their fathers had spoken before them.

> Besides, the conquerors were only a small minority, originally an army of sixty thousand now dispersed among two millions, so that they could not colonize the country, or mingle largely with the native race. Many of the victorious strangers coveted comparative isolation by fortifying themselves in castles – eleven hundred of which were built during the reign of Stephen. The government was, in fact, a military occupation, which had displaced the nobility and gentry – introduced a new dynasty and a foreign aristocracy. The immediate result was that two languages were spoken side by side, French and English, the former by the governing faction, and the latter by the masses of the people, thousands of whom could have little personal intercourse with the knights and barons of the Conqueror.[6]

A few examples of words that have survived from the very earliest translations might be in order. For instance, In Matthew 5.2, Jesus *opens his mouth*, a phrase that goes back to Wyclif – and the word, mouth (mu*th*), is recognisable even in the Lindisfarne Gospels. In 5.3, Lindisfarne translates the Latin *spiritu* with "gaste" – ghost, but from the time of Wyclif on, πνεῦμα has been rendered here by the Anglicised Latin "spirit." "Kingdom" is another word that has survived in various spellings from Wyclif's time: Lindisfarne has "ric," which is related to the German word, *reich*.

Verse 5 concerns the meek, but Lindisfarne and Wyclif have mild (milde / mylde). The "earth" can be found in Lindisfarne, and remains undisputed until Noah Webster: "they will possess the land."

In verse 6, the words "hunger" and "thirst" are recognisable in Lindisfarne, and Lindisfarne's translation of the Latin, *justiam*, is "so*th*fæstnisse" – soothfastness, or "truth-fastness" (see below). Tyndale's translation, "filled" is, in Lindisfarne "gefylled," and in Wyclif, "fulfillid" – full filled or filled full.

[6] John Eadie, *The English Bible*. In two volumes. (London: Macmillan and Co., 1876), vol. I, p. 20. *cf.* J. N. Hook, *History of the English Language*. (New York: Ronald Press, 1975), p. iii: "Language is a reflection of human beings. People's words show what the people are or think that they are or what they would like to be. Their words show their loves, their hates, their dreams, their successes, their blunders, their strength, their weaknesses. And just as people constantly change – at least on the surface – so the people's language changes. If nothing happened to people, language too would stay put."

The Lindisfarne Gospels, Wyclif, the Rheims NT, and Knox, all working from a Latin text, translate *mundo corde* as "clean [of / in] heart." With few exceptions, Tyndale's 1526 translation of καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ as "pure in [heart]" has been maintained to the present day.

In Matthew 5.10, those who are persecuted ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης (Vulgate = *propter iustitiam*) are declared blessed. Beginning with Weymouth, many recent English versions have translated the Greek in an active sense,[7] to emphasise that the righteousness that leads to persecution is deliberate, outward, discernible acts, not the imputed righteousness of divine favour: "the cause of right[eousness]" as distinct from the more ambiguous "righteousness."[8] The early translations are helpful in illustrating the meaning of "righteousness": From Wyclif to Coverdale, righteousness is "right-wise-ness" – the state of being "right-wise" or upright. For *propter iustitiam*, Lindisfarne captures both the passive and active meanings with "fore so*th*fæstnisse" – for "sooth-fast-ness," meaning holding fast to the "sooth" – the truth, or that which is true.

IV. Translation and Liturgy

The Bible is used for various purposes in settings various. In a Biblical Studies class in a university it is used in a manner different from that employed in a Bible study in a parish church. The Bible that one reads for personal study or edification may be different from the one the same person would use for reading out loud in a liturgical setting. The public proclamation of the Scriptures is an essential part of Christian worship – the *viva voci evangeli* (Luther) – and as such has specific requirements above

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[7] Not "active" in the sense of Voice (*versus* passive) but in the sense that righteousness is an abstract quality that is here expressed in a more active sense: *to see right prevail.*

[8] The Rheims "justice" comes directly from the Latin. Moffatt's "goodness" is not as far from the mark as the NAB's "holiness."

and beyond the competency of individual readers. Prime among these considerations is the intelligent choice of translation to be used in the liturgical setting.

1. Accuracy of Expression

A translation for liturgical use (or any other use) must be accurate. To point that out may seem overly simplistic, but it is a legitimate concern. The translation should take into account recent advances in the study of the ancient biblical languages and convey the meaning of the original text, as far as possible, in a clear fashion. Both the original (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) and the receptor (English) languages must be understood fully.

2. Befitting the Dignity of the Occasion

A translation must befit the dignity of the occasion. The Eastern Orthodox Churches illustrate the importance of the reading of the Scriptures with a procession to the ambo accompanied by the elevation of a handsomely bound lectionary, and the chanting of the words, "Wisdom! Let us be attentive to the Word of God!" The reading of the Bible is central to Christian worship and is an occasion of solemnity and dignity. Colloquialisms and other "slangy" expressions may be appropriate in translations that are intended for private use, but are beneath the dignity of the public proclamation of the Word. A translation needs to be accurate and understandable and of sufficiently dignified tone to be considered for use in public worship.

3. Appropriate to the Community

A translation must be appropriate for the community. The dignity of the occasion must be balanced by the needs and expectations of the community. The *Good News*

Bible is out of place in a university chapel,[9] as is the KJV at a children's service. Use of the *Revised English Bible* in a congregation of recent immigrants with little grasp of the English language, or the *New International Version* on Christmas Eve might both prove to be equally inappropriate. The issue of inclusive language has largely been sidestepped in this present study, but cannot be ignored in the selection of a translation for liturgical use. It has become common in liturgical and free churches alike to conclude the reading of a portion of Scripture with the words, "The Word of the Lord." If the congregation cannot respond, "Thanks be to God!" because of confusion or resentment caused by the translation, then the choice of translation needs to be reconsidered carefully.

4. Believability

"Believability" here does not refer to whether or not the readers or listeners "believe" the biblical narratives as such, but rather if the text is translated in such a way as to be credible. The question, "Could this have been spoken by a real person in this situation?" needs to be asked. If colloquialisms are to be avoided on the one hand, then an extreme formalism divorced from the experience of the "real" people in the "real" world (who are the usual occupants of pews on Sunday morning) must be avoided on the other. Biblical speech needs to be balanced carefully: it should not sound like everyday speech, because it is not everyday speech, but neither should it sound as though it might exist only on stage at Stratford.

5. Readability

Not only the *dignity* of the language must be considered, but also its *density*. The translation should not tie either the reader's tongue or the listener's mind in knots. An

[9] Not that there is anything "wrong" with the GNB as such, but if its elementary reading level and colloquial tone are all that can be handled by university students, then questions need to be asked about the students, not the translation.

example of particularly dense English prose is this two-sentence definition of "intertextuality" in *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*:

> Although *intertexto*, to intermingle while weaving, was used in proper and figurative senses in Latin, 'intertextuality' (*intertextualité*) is a recent creation of Julia Kristeva to elaborate a theory of the text as a network of sign systems situated in relation to other systems of signifying practices (ideologically marked sign usage) in a culture. By 'situ[ating] the literary structure within a social ensemble considered as a textual ensemble' ('Problèmes' 61) intertextuality would overcome the limitations of formalism and structuralism by orienting the text to its sociohistoric signification in the interaction of different codes, discourses or voices transversing the text.[10]

There is probably no passage in all of Scripture that approaches this complexity, but it does demonstrate the point: the text from the *Encyclopedia* given above is not suited to reading out loud. A "readable" translation will treat poetry as poetry, providing sense lines. A "readable" translation will not inflict the strange syntax of the original upon its readers / hearers. Above all, a "readable" translation will not "sound" like a translation at all, but will flow with the smoothness and elegance of natural English just as if the text had always been in English.

6. Traditional

The editors of the King James Version were instructed to prepare not a new translation, but a traditional one. The result was that (directly or indirectly) four-fifths of the Pentateuch and New Testament was directly based on Tyndale's translation of eighty years earlier. Modern literary theorists have described the phenomenon of intertext, that no text can be divorced from its context. In the case of the English Bible, this includes all previous translations, the force of which are still felt even in modern translations. The *New English Bible* made some bold steps forward with its new and fresh translations, some of which were abandoned within a generation by the editors of the *Revised English*

[10] Barbara Godard, "Intertextuality" *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*, p. 568.

Bible in favour of more traditional renderings. Perhaps the instructions given to King James' translators are still pertinent for today, and in the end there can be no such thing as a "new" translation, but only old ones constantly revised.

6. The Continuing Task

"Of the making of books there is no end." That might well be paraphrased to say, "Of the making of translations there will be no end." It is safe to say that there will never be *one* definitive English Bible that will suit the needs and expectations of all people. There will be new translations appearing in the future and there will be continued confusion among the laity – and among the clergy – as to the necessity of these "new Bibles." But the need will always be the same: to translate the Scriptures in a way that makes them accessible to modern men and women (and children!). English is constantly changing and growing. It is a living language, capable of ever greater and greater subtlety. Finally to arrive at one definitive English translation would probably be an indication that the language had become as "dead" as Biblical Hebrew or the *Koine* Greek of the New Testament. And that is about as likely to happen as the advent of that imaginary "definitive" translation.

7. Conclusion

One might expect that a review of the various English translations of a brief passage of Scripture over a period of a thousand years would reveal several points of radical change, perhaps reflecting some social upheaval, ecclesiastical turmoil, or political transition. In fact, this study reveals that, apart from the linguistic changes brought about as a result of the eleventh-century Norman conquest, the translation of the Beatitudes into English has altered very little since Wyclif's seminal work of 1382. Those who seek a constant element in an ever-changing world might find it in this fact.

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Bishops' Bible(1568)

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Appendix I: The Greek and Latin Texts of Matthew 5.1-12

UBS *Greek New Testament*, 4th edition revised, 1994

1 Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ·
2 καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων,
3 Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
4 μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.
5 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.
6 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.
7 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.
8 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.
9 μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.
10 μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.
11 μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.
12 χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

UBS *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, 4th edition, 1994

1 videns autem turbas ascendit in montem et cum sedisset accesserunt ad eum discipuli eius
2 et aperiens os suum docebat eos dicens
3 beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum
4 beati mites quoniam ipsi possidebunt terram
5 beati qui lugent quoniam ipsi consolabuntur
6 beati qui esuriunt et sitiunt iustitiam quoniam ipsi saturabuntur
7 beati misericordes quia ipsi misericordiam consequentur
8 beati mundo corde quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt
9 beati pacifici quoniam filii Dei vocabuntur
10 beati qui persecutionem patiuntur propter iustitiam quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum
11 beati estis cum maledixerint vobis et persecuti vos fuerint et dixerint omne malum adversum vos mentientes propter me
12 gaudete et exultate quoniam merces vestra copiosa est in caelis sic enim persecuti sunt prophetas qui fuerunt ante vos

Appendix II: Some Other Translations

The following four translations have not been included in the main body of the paper because they are too far outside the mainstream tradition of English translation. Three of these (Smith, Stuart, and Jordan) are quite winsome in their own idiosyncratic ways; Schonfield's work is significant in that it is a translation of the New Testament by a Jewish scholar.

1. William Wye Smith, *The New Testament in Braid Scots.*[1]

And, seein the thrang o' folk, he gaed up intil a mountain; and whan he was sutten-doon, his disciples gather't aboot.
And he open't his mooth, and instructit them, and qou' he:
"Happy the spirits that are lown and cannie: for the kingdom o' Heeven is waitin for them!
"Happy they wha are makin their maen; for they sal fin' comfort and peace.
"Happy the lowly and meek o' the yirth: for the yirth sal be their ain haddin.
"Happy they whase hunger and drouth are a' for holiness: for they sal be satisfy't!
"Happy the pitfu': for they sal win pitie theirsels!
"Happy the pure-heartit: for their een sal dwal upon God!
"Happy the makkers-up o' strife: for they sal be coontit for bairns o' God!
"Happy the ill-treatit anes for the sake o' gude: for they'se hae the kingdom o' God!
"Happy sal ye be whan folk sal misca' ye, and ill-treat ye, and say a' things again ye wrangouslie for my sake!
"Joy ye, and be blythe! for yere meed is great in Heeven! for e'en sae did they to the prophets afore ye!"

2. Jamie Stuart, *A Scot's Gospel.*[2]

An Jesus, seein a thrang o folk wha cam aboot him, gaed on up intil the hill again. And whan his disciples gaithert roon him, he taught the folk–
'Blythe are they wha hen thair need o' God; for the Kingdom o Hevin is waitin for them.
'Blythe are they wha are sorrowful; for they sall find comfort an peace.
'Blythe are the lowly an meek o the erthe; for they sall inherit the erthe.

[1] Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1924.

[2] Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1985.

'Blythe are they whase hunger an drowth are aa for holiness; for they sall be satisfyit.
'Blythe are the pitifu; for they sall win pitie thairsels.
'Blythe are the pure o hert; for thair een sall dwell apon God.
'Blythe are the peacemakers; for they sall be coonit as bairns o God.
'Blythe are teh ill-treatit anes for the sake o guid; for they sall hae the Kingdom o God.
'Blyteh sall ye be whan folk sall mis-caa ye, an persecute ye, an say things aganis ye faus, for ma sake. Be blythe and hae joy, for yer reward is grete in Hevin; for e'en so did they tae the prophets afore ye.'

3. Clarence Jordan, *The Cotton Patch Version.*[3]

When Jesus say the large crowd, he went up the hill and sat down. His students gathered around him, and he began teaching them. This is what he said:
"The spiritually humble are God's people, for they are citizens of his new order.
"They who are deeply concerned are God's people, for they will see their ideas become reality.
"They who are gentle are his people, for they will be his partners across the land.
"They who have an unsatisfied appetite for the right are God's people, for they will be given plenty to chew on.
"The generous are God's people, for they will be treated generously.
"Those whose motives are pure are God's people, for they will have spiritual insight.
"Men of peace and good will are God's people, for they will be known throughout the land as his children.
"Those who have endured much for what's right are God's people; they are citizens of his new order.
"You are all God's people when others call you names, and harass you and tell all kinds of false tales on you just because you follow me. Be cheerful and good-humored, because your spiritual advantage is great. For that's the way they treated men of conscience in the past."

Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Authentic New Testament.*[4]

Now when Jesus saw the crowds he ascended the hillside, and when he had sat down his disciples gathered round about him, and he began to teach them.
'How fortunate are the oppressed in spirit,' he said, 'for theirs is the Kingdom of God!
'How fortunate are those who grieve, for they shall be comforted!
'How fortunate are the gentle, for they shall inherit the land!
'How fortunate are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied!
'How fortunate are those with pure minds, for they shall see God!

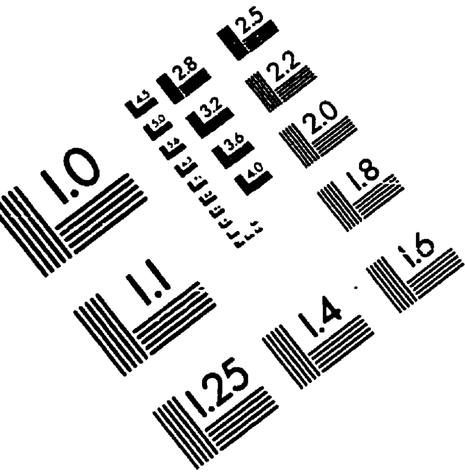
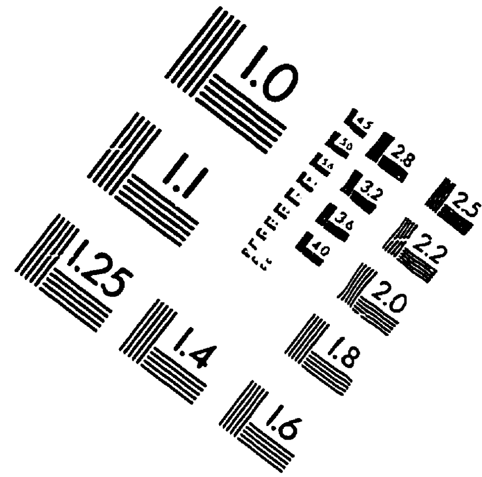
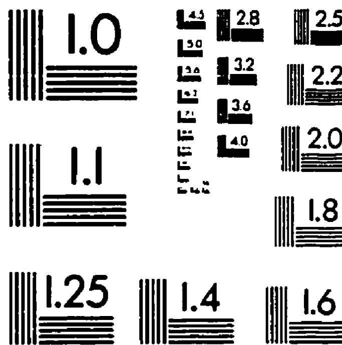
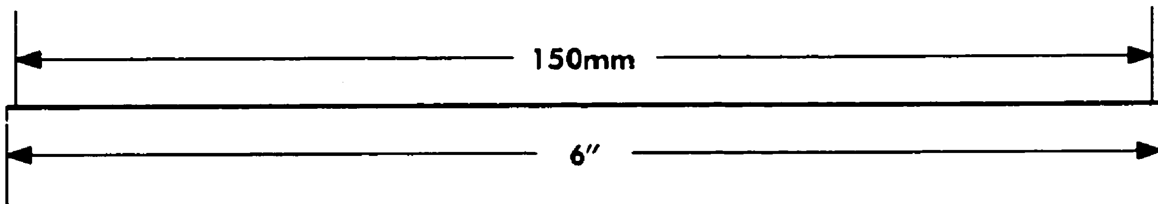
---

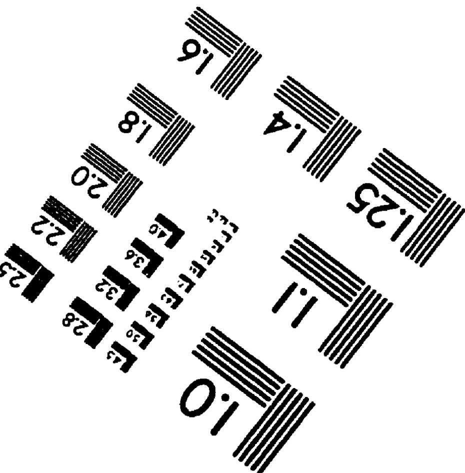
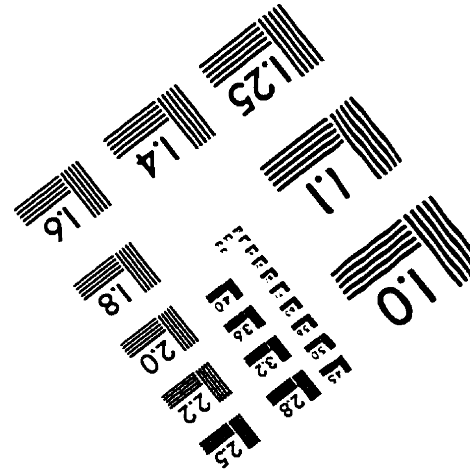
[3] (*The Cotton Patch Version of Matthew and John*) New York: Association Press, 1970.

[4] New York: Mentor, 1958.

'How fortunate are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God!
'How fortunate are those who are persecuted in the cause of justice, for theirs is the Kingdom of God!
How fortunate are you when they revile you, and persecute you, and speak every kind of evil against you falsely because of me! Rejoice and be glad, for your heavenly reward is great; for so did they persecute the prophets who were before you.'

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

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