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"MEN AND BRETHREN ... " (ACTS 1.16)

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The unnatural AV/KJV opening of Acts 1.16, "Men *and* brethren" was rightly changed to "Brethren" in RSV, and to "Friends" (footnote "Gk *brothers*") in NRSV. It is an idiom unnatural in English, unknown in Semitic languages[1], and it presents several difficulties in translation.

1. "Men" (*andres* vocative) alone is found in Acts 7.26; 14.15; 19.25; 27.10, 21, 25; nowhere else in the NT apart from Eph 5.25 and Col 3.19, where the context shows clearly that it means "husbands." In all the Acts occurrences except 14.15, it is probable that only men are involved. In 7.26, they are the two Israelites whom Moses found fighting[2]. In 19.25 they are silversmiths and other skilled workers at Ephesus, and in ch. 27 they are a ship's crew. In 14.15, the "men" are a crowd at Lystra wanting to worship Paul as a god. NRSV and NIVI[3] translate "friends" here, and "men" elsewhere, but in view of the general usage of *andres* it seems likely that men predominated in the crowd to which Paul spoke. In some languages it may seem impolite to address men as "men," which is probably why AV/KJV used "sirs." This does not appear to be a major or a widespread problem, though no doubt in some languages it will be necessary to assess, case by case, the respective status of speakers and addressees.

2. "Brothers" (*adelphoi* vocative) occurs frequently alone in the NT letters, especially in Paul, and also in Acts 3.17; 6.3; and 23.5. In 3.17, Peter is speaking to the "people of Israel" (v. 12) in Solomon's Colonnade. It is not certain where this part of the Jerusalem temple was, and therefore whether women would be admitted to it. In 6.3, the Twelve are addressing "all the disciples" (6.2), presumably including women, as in the NT letters. In 23.5, however, Paul is speaking in the Sanhedrin, so NIVI is right to translate "brothers." More generally, there is ample evidence[4] that *adelphoi* could be used to include both brothers and sisters, whether in the literal or in the extended, distinctively Christian sense, justifying the NIVI translation "brothers and sisters."

3. *Andres* is used with other vocatives than *adelphoi*, normally denoting place or people of origin: Galileans (Acts 1.11), Jews and others (2.14), Israelites (2.22; 3.12; 5.35; 13.16, including others; 21.28), Athenians (17.22), or Ephesians (19.35). Modern translations generally find it more natural to omit any equivalent of *andres*, thereby legitimately avoiding the question of whether women are included.

4. *Andres adelphoi*, AV/KJV's "men and brethren," occurs frequently in Acts, but nowhere else in the Greek Bible apart from 4 Maccabees 8.19, where NRSV retains the literal translation "O men and brothers"; only men are addressed. Since "and" in English normally signals new information, it would seem better to translate simply "brothers" here.

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1 C. K. Barrett, *Acts* (Vol. 1; Edinburgh, 1994), 83.

2 The *adelphoi* following *andres* is nominative, not vocative: "Men, you are brothers."

3 NIV Inclusive Language Edition, London, 1995. Quotations are from this version unless otherwise stated.

4 BDAG3 under *adelphos*.

5. In nine of the 13 occurrences of *andres adelphoi* in Acts, Christians are addressing groups consisting mainly or wholly of Jews. In 2.29, Peter is speaking to the Pentecost crowd whom he also calls "Jews" (v. 14) and "Israelites" (v. 22). It seems probable that women were present in the crowd (we do not know where they met), and there seems at first sight no reason to suppose that Peter would have ignored them; so NIVI's "brothers and sisters," and "his or her own language" (v. 6) may be provisionally accepted. Other occurrences are clearer. In 7.2, Stephen is speaking to the Sanhedrin, as Paul is in 23.1, 6; no women would be present. In 13.26, 38, Paul is speaking to "people of Israel" and God-fearers in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch; we shall return later to the possibility of women hearers. In 22.1, Paul is speaking to a riotous crowd in Jerusalem, somewhere between the temple (21.30) and the Roman barracks (22.37); it is difficult, though not perhaps quite impossible, to think that women were involved, and accordingly NIVI translates "brothers" ("and fathers"). In 28.17, Paul is speaking to Jewish leaders, all of whom may confidently be assumed to be men. Acts 1.16 will be discussed in section 7.

6. In two of the other occurrences, Jews are addressing Christians, if the anachronism may be permitted: their use of "brothers" in 2.37 and 13.15 shows that they considered them rightly as fellow Jews. In both cases, the Christians addressed are men. In the other two occurrences, 15.7, 13, Peter and James, respectively, are addressing the Jerusalem council, consisting of male "apostles and elders" (v. 6). In all these four cases, NIVI accordingly translates *andres adelphoi* as "brothers."

7. There remains the most difficult text, Acts 1.16, with which we began. Peter is speaking to the "believers" (v. 15, literally "brothers,") who now number 120. It would be inconceivable that these did not include some women, even if Luke had not just stated (v. 14) that the apostles "joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus." So why does he address them as what AV/KJV called "men and brethren"? We have seen that in Acts, *andres* vocative tends strongly to retain its normal meaning "men." The only other doubtful case which we have noted is that of the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, where Paul twice (13.26, 38) addresses the assembly as *andres adelphoi*. One is reminded that, at least in later Jewish tradition, women did not count towards the quorum that constituted a synagogue[1]. It is therefore likely that, whether or not women were present, Paul would conform to custom and address the official, male members. If so, NIVI's "(my) brothers and sisters" would be inappropriate. It is similarly possible that in 1.16, Peter would consider the Christian assembly as a synagogue, and that the members of the assembly also considered themselves as such. This would explain Peter's otherwise extremely difficult use of *andres adelphoi*. The Pentecost crowd could scarcely be considered a synagogue, but it is not impossible that male-oriented, synagogue-type usage influenced Peter's way of speaking there also.

8. On the one hand, this conclusion goes against our current, generally correct, tendency to use inclusive language wherever possible, and to apply the hermeneutics of suspicion in deciding what is possible. But on the other hand, this understanding of Peter's language in Acts 1.16 reminds us of the essential

1 Ben Witherington III, "Women (NT)," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* VI, N. Y., 1992, 952-961, here 957b.

Jewishness of the primitive church. If so, the most appropriate translation, linguistically and sociologically, would be, not in this case NIVI's "Brothers and sisters," and not NRSV's "Friends," but simply "brothers"—or perhaps the *Gute Nachricht Bibel*'s "dear brothers."

Review

MacKenzie, Cameron A. *The battle for the Bible in England, 1557–1582*. N. Y.: Peter Lang, 2002. xi + 338 pp. $65.95. ISBN0-8204-5810-4.

The story of the significant role of Bible translation in the Reformation has been told many times over, but MacKenzie puts this history in the framework of the theological debate between Protestants/Anglicans and Roman Catholics. He first examines the history of the Geneva Bible (1557-) and the theological debate which surrounded its appearance. The *sola scriptura* doctrine and the presentation of the words of Scripture in the vernacular contributed to the demise of the Church as mediator and interpreter. The notes of the Geneva Bible at least in part presented a particular theological context to the vernacular reader.

Criticism of the Geneva Bible was heard from both Anglicans, who objected to the theology of some of the notes, and Roman Catholics who continued to object to *sola scriptura* and wrestled with the issue of vernacular Bibles. In response to the challenge of the Geneva Bible the Anglicans produced the Bishops' Bible. While not a marketing success to match the Geneva Bible, it did help to assert the legitimacy of the Protestant view of scriptural authority and satisfy the need for an authoritative translation for the Church. The Roman Catholics as active participants in the debate over Scripture would not accede to *sola scriptura* but did produce a vernacular translation as a pragmatic solution to the issue of demonstrating the scriptural foundation of the Catholic faith, hence, the publication of the Rheims New Testament in 1582.

MacKenzie's account of this crucial chapter in the history of Bible translation succeeds in demonstrating the wide-ranging impact of vernacular translation that shaped the theological discussions of the second half of the 16th century. There are lessons to be learned by rehearsing this history, calling us to see Bible translation in its theological context, not only at the level of particular exegetical issues but in terms of churches' views of Scripture authority.

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