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## HAGGADAH

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The most interesting piece of recent Biblical news is the decision of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine to inaugurate a new programme with regard to the translation of the Bible. Our readers are no doubt aware that the Old Testament translation from the original languages has been completed except for the historical books. The latter and the whole of the New Testament have been the object of American Catholic scholars' attention for the past several years. The new readings used in the liturgy are from this fresh translation.

The Episcopal Committee has now decided to take some positive steps towards preparing a common Bible. The details of this will be known to the public by the time this column appears. We wish only to remark on one aspect of the translation—the decision to make use of the spellings of Biblical names as found in the Revised Standard Version. This represents the abandonment of a long tradition in the Church; we would like to reflect for a moment on the history of that tradition.

In the disciplinary decree of the Council of Trent it was declared that the Vulgate edition of the Scriptures was to be used for all public purposes by Catholics (DB 785). The decree was not an unreasonable one, for the state of textual criticism at the time was such that a truly critical edition of the Scriptures from the original languages would have been impossible. At any rate, all future editions of the Catholic Bible were affected by the decree. This determined too, though not by the express wording of the decree, the form of the spelling of the proper names throughout the Bible. In the official Vulgate text which was eventually published, those names were given in their Greek, rather than their Hebrew, form. Since the New Testament names were originally in a Greek form they caused no problem. But in the Old Testament the Greek form and the original Hebrew form of some names differ greatly. The untrained layman might have difficulty in recognizing *Osee* as a form of *Hosea*, or *Abdias* as a variation of *Obadiah*.

The preservation of the Vulgate, and therefore of the Greek, form was adhered to by all the official English Catholic versions up to recent times. In 1943 Pope Pius XII, aware of the great advances made in the science of textual criticism and hence of the ability to restore an edition of the Scriptures based on the original languages that would be much more faithful to the authentic text than the Vulgate, encouraged scholars to undertake the work of such translations. The Catholic Biblical Association of America accepted the challenge and has been working on the translation ever since.

The decision to make a new translation from the original languages, however, did not necessarily determine the form of spelling of proper names to be used. Accordingly, the committee of translators, after careful consideration, decided to introduce new spellings which they felt would be a more correct *English* rendering of the names. Understandably, some confusion did result. But it is doubtful whether the Confraternity spelling would have prevailed. At any rate, the decision of the Episcopal Committee to adopt the R.S.V. spellings will now settle the matter.

For the interest of our readers we give below the threefold spelling of those books of the Old Testament that will be affected. If a book is not mentioned, it means that there is no variation in the three versions. The first column contains the form used in the old Douay–Rheims translation, the second column represents the current Confraternity version, and the final column the R.S.V. that will now be adopted by Catholics.

This decision will also affect many other names familiar to us, especially from the historical books of the Old Testament. Instead of *Gedeon* we will find *Gideon*; instead of *Messias* (*Messia*), *Messiah*; instead of *Elias* and *Eliseus*, *Elijah* and *Elisha*; instead of *Achaz* and *Ezechias*, *Ahaz* and *Hezekiah*; and instead of that sonorous *Nabuchodonosor*, the more proper *Nebuchadnezzar*.

The change will inevitably create numerous problems for those publishers who are involved in the publication of Bibles or Biblical studies. For all of these we have sincere sympathy; but we believe that the decision was an extremely wise one in the long run. It seems clear now that the Hebrew spelling of these names (as in the R.S.V.) is the one preferred by the majority of Bible scholars and readers, and there seems to be no adequate reason why Catholics should retain a different form. Certainly for editors and publishers of the future this will be a tremendous benefit.

No doubt the decision will also affect the variations in the numbering of the psalms, to which we referred in the April 1964 issue of *The Bible Today*. In the future there should be no need to put an extra number in parentheses. Finally, the titles of the books of *Kings* will also be changed. Whereas we have used the titles 1, 2, 3 and 4 *Kings*, the R.S.V. calls them 1 and 2 *Samuel* and 1 and 2 *Kings*. Before this, one almost had to know the faith of the author to determine whether the reference to 2 *Kings* was to 2 *Samuel* or to 4 *Kings*.

<i>Douay–Rheims</i>	<i>Confraternity</i>	<i>R.S.V.</i>
Josue	Josue	Joshua
1 and 2 Paralipomenon	1 and 2 Paralipomenon	1 and 2 Chronicles
1 Esdras	1 Esdras	Ezra
2 Esdras	2 Esdras	Nehemiah
Tobias	Tobias	Tobit
Canticle of Canticles	Canticle of Canticles	Song of Solomon
Wisdom	Wisdom	Wisdom of Solomon
Ecclesiasticus	Sirach	Sirach
Isaias	Isaia	Isaiah
Jeremias	Jeremia	Jeremiah

*Douay-Rheims*

Ezechiel  
Osee  
Abdias  
Jonas  
Micheas  
Habacuc  
Sophonias  
Aggeus  
Zacharias  
Malachias  
1 and 2 Machabees

*Confraternity*

Ezechiel  
Osee  
Abdia  
Jona  
Michea  
Habacuc  
Sophonia  
Aggai  
Zacharia  
Malachia  
1 and 2 Machabees

*R.S.V.*

Ezekiel  
Hosea  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Micah  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi  
1 and 2 Maccabees