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Submission from AMRI on new Lectionary Translation

AMRI welcomes that the Irish Episcopal Conference is consulting widely on the translation of the new lectionary. The Lectionary for Mass is the liturgical volume from which God's Word is proclaimed during the celebration of the Eucharist; so it is of central importance in the life of the Church. We welcome the opportunity to make this submission.

AMRI

The ASSOCIATION OF LEADERS OF MISSIONARIES AND RELIGIOUS OF IRELAND (AMRI) is a representative and membership organisation. Our vision is to live the joy of the Gospel. Our mission is to promote active collaboration among the member religious and missionary congregations, including lay missionaries. By sharing the message and meaning of the Gospel, AMRI seeks to develop and promote religious and missionary life as a vibrant, prophetic, organic and integral part of the life of the Church. AMRI seeks to respond with courage and confidence to existing and emerging realities in Ireland and overseas - particularly the needs of people experiencing exclusion and our endangered planet.

Our experience

As an association of almost 150 religious organisations, missionary societies and apostolic groups in Ireland, with almost 7000 members; we have an extraordinary breadth of experience in pastoral work (hospitals, parishes, town churches, schools), teaching and catechetics (at home and broad), spirituality, social justice, ecology and missionary activity across the globe. We hope to model an inclusive church and we care about gender equality.

The place of the Scriptures

The Scriptures stand at the heart of who we are and all we do. As hearers of the Word, we allow the Scriptures to influence and nourish us. It is therefore important to us that we have a reliable and inclusive-language text which is both attractive, accessible, user-friendly and memorable. If the language can be poetic and beautiful so much the better. The Scriptures are proclaimed so reading them aloud should flow with a familiar cadence. A lectionary translation using archaic expressions and exclusionary language will be a barrier for all but especially for those for whom English is not their first language.

Our proposal

Bearing in mind the above rationale and the evidence below, the AMRI Executive recommends the use of the Revised New Jerusalem Bible.

ASSOCIATION OF LEADERS OF MISSIONARIES AND RELIGIOUS OF IRELAND, CLG.

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Comparing the English Standard Version (ESV) & Revised New Jerusalem Bible (RNJB)

The following comparisons between the RNJB and the ESV illustrates the case for a preference for the RNJB.

The Deutero-canonical books in the ESV

It is to be noted that ESV translation the additional Catholic books (the Deutero-canonical books) is a *very* light redaction of the old RSV of many years ago. There are one or two adjustments per chapter; in other words, this is not a new translation at all but a rather lazy reprint. The same may be said generally of the ESV. It is, in effect, the RSV with “thees” and “thous” taken out and not much else. English, as it is spoken, has moved on.

Appendix 1: is a series of comparisons between the two versions proposed, the English Standard Version and the Revised New Jerusalem Bible. For the Old Testament, the examples are taken from the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the Wisdom books. The New Testament examples are taken from Matthew, Romans and Hebrews. *Appendix 2:* is on inclusive language in St Paul in general and in Romans in particular.

Appendix 1: Comparing the ESV and the RNJB

(NB this is a truly random selection and could easily be replicated across both versions). Occasionally, the RNJB is wanting but the ESV fails far more frequently.

ESV

Gen 1:6 And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” **7** And God made the expanse and separated the waters that were under the expanse from the waters that were above the expanse. And it was so. **8** And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

Amos 5:23 Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. **24** But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

- **6:** And(s): redundant and unidiomatic in English and so omitted in the RNJB.
- **7:** Expanse: vague and a really poor translation.
- **Heaven:** dome is much better.
- **8:** RNJB much more idiomatic “evening came” etc.
- RNJB is much more faithful to the ancient Hebrew picture of the earth and the sky.

RNJB

Gen 1:6 God said, ‘Let there be a dome through the middle of the waters to divide the waters in two.’ And so it was. **7** God made the dome, and it divided the waters under the dome from the waters above the dome. **8** God called the vault ‘sky’. Evening came and morning came: the second day.

Amos 5:23 Spare me the din of your chanting, let me hear none of your strumming on lyres, **24** let justice flow like water, and uprightness like a never-failing stream!

Eccl 3:14 I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him. **15** That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God seeks what has been driven away.

- **14a:** “know” is more accurate than “perceived”.
- **14b:** add and subtract are more idiomatic and more succinct.
- **15ab:** “That which is” is very clumsy. Here the RNJB is easily the better text.
- **15c:** ESV makes no sense here. RNJB clarifies too much. The verse *is* obscure.

Eccl 3:14 I know that whatever God does will be for ever. To this there is nothing to add, from this there is nothing to subtract, and the way God acts inspires dread. **15** What is, has been already, what will be, is already; God seeks out anyone who is persecuted.

ESV

Matt 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

- **23:** Behold is simply archaic English; no one talks like that anymore.
- ESV future tense is more accurate here.
- **23c:** the addition of “is” in “God-is-with-us” is more fluent and the use of hyphens makes it easier to read.
- **24:** “he took her as his wife” makes more sense than obscure and incomplete “he took his wife”.
- **25a:** “knew her not” fails on two counts (a) 16th century English (b) simply unclear. RNJB much better here.
- **25b:** ESV “until” is better than RNJB “when”.
- **25c:** RNJB “he named him Jesus” is far better than ESV “he called his name Jesus”.

RNJB

Matt 1:23 Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Emmanuel, a name which means ‘God-is-with-us’. **24** When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took her as his wife; **25** he had not had intercourse with her when she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.

Rom 3:22b For there is no distinction: **23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, **25** whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.

- This is a notoriously difficult text to translate.
- **23:** RNJB is idiomatic.
- **24:** RNJB is accurate and succinct.
- **25a:** Propitiation is an over-translation, importing Anselm's soteriology into the ancient text.
- **25b:** the clarity of the ESV is a mistake; the ambiguity of the RNJB is more faithful.

Rom 3:23 No distinction is made. for all have sinned and lack God's glory, **24** and all are freely justified by the gift of his grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. **25** God appointed him as a reconciliation in his blood through faith, by the shedding of his blood, to show his righteousness...

ESV

Heb 2:10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. **11** For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, **12** saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."

- ESV and RNJB are close here.
- **10a:** RNJB adds "God" for the sake of clarity.
- **10b:** both leave "sons" here, where "children" would have worked well.
- **10:** founder / pioneer — both are accurate; there is more energy in pioneer.
- **11-12:** RNJB accurately makes the language inclusive. It is surely not the case that only males are saved by Jesus.

RNJB

Heb 2:10 It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should, in bringing many sons to glory, make perfect through suffering the pioneer of their salvation. **11** For consecrator and consecrated have all the same Father; that is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters **12** in the text: I shall proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, praise you in full assembly; ...

Appendix 2: Inclusive Language in Paul

Paul uses the word "brothers" inclusively and the apostle is not addressing only the males in the congregation. To translate it *slavishly and exclusively* is, in this case, a plain failure of accuracy. The RNJB does much better.

To take examples from only one letter, the word brother (*adelphos*) occurs 19 times in Romans. Below is the full list: the RNJB translation is accurate, consistent and unobtrusive.

By contrast, the ESV uses sister only 4 times across the seven undisputed letters: **Rom 16:1, 15; 1 Cor 7:15; Phlm 1:2**. Three out of four times the meaning is a blood sister (*adelphē*) where this translation is unavoidable.

In Romans, at least, the RNJB is much better than its own predecessors, the JB and the NJB.

Rom 1:13 I want you to be quite certain too, brothers **and sisters**, that I have often planned to visit you—...

Rom 7:1 Do you not realise, brothers **and sisters**, ...

Rom 7:4 In the same way you, through the body of Christ, you also my brothers **and sisters** ...

Rom 8:12 So then, my brothers **and sisters**, we have no obligation ...

Rom 8:29 because those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the eldest among many brothers **and sisters** ...

Rom 9:3 I could pray that I myself might be accursed and cut off from Christ, for the sake of my own brothers **and sisters** ...

Rom 10:1 Brothers **and sisters**, the desire of my heart ...

Rom 11:25 I do not wish you , brothers **and sisters**, to be ignorant ...

Rom 12:1 I urge you, then, brothers **and sisters** , ...

Rom 14:10 Why, then, do you judge your brother **or sister** ...

Rom 14:13 ...none of us will place obstacles in the way of a brother **or sister** ...

Rom 14:15 and indeed if a brother **or sister** is hurt ...

Rom 14:21 It is good to abstain from eating any meat, or drinking any wine, or anything else by which a brother **or sister** ...

Rom 15:14 For my part, brothers **and sisters**, I am convinced ...

Rom 15:30 Meanwhile I urge you, brothers **and sisters**, ...

Rom 16:14 Greetings to Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers **and sisters** who are with them.

Rom 16:17 I urge you, brothers **and sisters**, to be on your guard ...

Rom 16:23 Greetings to you from Gaius, my host here, and host of the whole church. Erastus, the city treasurer, sends greetings to you, and our **brother** Quartus.

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