

Cambridge University Press  
 978-0-521-14591-6 - The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville  
 Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof  
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## The *Etymologies* of Isidore of Seville

This work is a complete English translation of the Latin *Etymologies* of Isidore, bishop of Seville (c. 560–636). Isidore compiled the work between c. 615 and the early 630s and it takes the form of an encyclopedia, arranged by subject matter. It contains much lore of the late classical world beginning with the Seven Liberal Arts, including Rhetoric, and touches on thousands of topics ranging from the names of God, the terminology of the law, the technologies of fabrics, ships, and agriculture, to the names of cities and rivers, the theatrical arts, and cooking utensils. Isidore provides etymologies for most of the terms he explains, finding in the causes of words the underlying key to their meaning. This book offers a highly readable translation of the twenty books of the *Etymologies*, one of the most widely known texts for a thousand years from Isidore's time.

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with the collaboration of  
MURIEL HALL



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We dedicate this translation to

ANTONIO

ANNABELLE BEATRICE BERGHOF

and

HILDEGARD, GREGOR, ALICE, and INES BERGHOF

THOMAS and PETER BARNEY

PHILIP

and in memory of

BENNETT AND JEANETTE LEWIS

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Note to the reader

This translation is based on the Latin text edited by W. M. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX* (Oxford, 1911). Lindsay’s text remains in print from Oxford University Press (Clarendon), and is otherwise available in a facing-page Spanish translation (see Bibliography, Oroz Reta and Marcos Casquero, editors) and a facing-page Italian translation (Canale), as well as on the web and on a CD-ROM (see Introduction p. 27). The correspondence between Isidore and Braulio presented as an Appendix is also edited by Lindsay, and is found in early manuscripts of the *Etymologies*.

Parentheses (round brackets) are used to set off the Latin word or English translation in question, and for brief explanatory notes or citations of texts. We set off parenthetical remarks by Isidore himself with commas or dashes. Hence, except for the Latin words, none of the material within parentheses is found in Isidore’s text. We regularly signal our explanatory additions with “i.e.” or “cf.” when the words might otherwise appear to be Isidore’s. We use square brackets only to enclose material likewise enclosed in square brackets in Lindsay’s edition, that is, wording found in some but not all of the manuscripts on which he based his text.

Isidore left a number of items incomplete. These are signaled by three ellipsis points (. . .) in the translation. Ellipsis points are otherwise used only rarely at the beginning or end of Isidore’s quotations from earlier authors.

We avoid using other than common abbreviations. Of cited works we abbreviate Vergil’s *Aeneid*, *Georgics*, and *Eclogues*, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, as *Aen.*, *Geo.*, *Ecl.*, and *Met.* We abbreviate “literally” as “lit.” On “gen.” and “ppl.” see below.

We include the Latin for key terms. We also provide the Latin in those instances, the great majority, where Isidore presents an etymology that depends on the sound or shape of the Latin itself.

Lindsay provided precise references to modern texts of the many authors whom Isidore quotes or cites. We have reviewed and updated these, referring in the first instance to the texts that appear in the Loeb Classical Library, and for other texts to the Oxford Classical Texts, the Teubner series, and other standard modern editions. A number of poets known only in fragments are cited from Edward Courtney, ed., *The Fragmentary Latin Poets* (Oxford, 1993). Citations of Varro from Funaioli’s collection of grammarians’ fragments (see Bibliography) are signaled with “Funaioli.” Isidore will often but not always name the author, less often the title of the work, when he quotes; the missing information appears here within parentheses. Where Isidore’s quotation differs from the modern received text the translation follows Isidore’s words, and the reference is preceded by “cf.”; for examples see p. 87.

Often an oblique form of a Latin noun or verb gives a better idea of how an etymological relationship is devised than the usual nominative or infinitive form that we provide. In these cases we also give the genitive form or the perfect participle, abbreviated as “gen.” and “ppl.” Unless it obscures Isidore’s point, we give the usual spellings of Latin words in modern dictionaries, nouns in the nominative and verbs in the infinitive, and supply clarifications when needed.

Familiar biblical figures and places appear in their common English forms. Otherwise we generally follow the Douai-Rheims translation of the Latin Vulgate for biblical quotations, adjusting the translation when Isidore’s quotation differs from the Vulgate reading. We cite book, chapter, and verse from the Vulgate. I and II Kings correspond to I and II Samuel in the Authorized (King James; New Revised Standard) Version; III and IV Kings correspond to AV’s I and II Kings; Psalms 10 to 145 correspond to AV’s Psalms 11 to 146.

Isidore’s many repetitions of material are generally not signaled; these may be located by way of the Index.

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<p>xii    <i>Note to the reader</i></p> <hr/> <p>Two facts should be noted, as we have not repeated them in the many relevant places in the text. A good number of Isidore’s etymologies depend on the fact that the sound represented by <i>b</i> in Latin had by his time become indistinguishable for many speakers from the consonantal sound represented by <i>v</i>. Also, in Isidore’s geography, as was standard in the classical world, the land masses of the world (the <i>orbis</i>, which we translate</p>	<p>as “globe”) were thought to be entirely encircled by the continuous body of water called <i>Oceanus</i>. We regularly translate this term as “Ocean,” with a capital O, and we use “sea” for other large bodies of water. With this revised edition (2009), we have been able to take into account two excellent new translations, those of Angelo Valastro Canale into Italian and Lenelotte Möller into German.</p>
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