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052178834X - A Companion to the New Testament, Second Edition

A. E. Harvey

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A Companion to the New Testament

Since this *Companion to the New Testament* was first published in 1970, new methods of interpretation and sustained research into the environment of Jesus and of the early church have combined to correct former misunderstandings and to set old problems in a new light. This fully revised second edition now follows the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) to provide a running commentary on the text of the New Testament while taking account of the findings of recent scholarship. Using no technical language, it aims to set the text in the context of the time and place in which it was written and to clarify its meaning in the light of modern methods of research and interpretation. Accessible and up to date, this work will be invaluable to clergy, students and all who have a serious interest in the New Testament.

DR A. E. HARVEY was formerly a Lecturer in Theology at Oxford University and Sub-Dean of Westminster. He is now retired and is a Fellow of the George Bell Institute.

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THE NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

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Preface

The first edition of this *Companion* was commissioned forty years ago by the Oxford and Cambridge University Presses as an aid to the general reader of the recently published New English Bible (New Testament, 1961). This was the first ecumenically authorized translation into modern English; but it remained in currency for barely thirty years. In 1989 it was replaced by the Revised English Bible, which effectively made its predecessor obsolete.

As a result, the *Companion*, though still in circulation, ceased to be an appropriate tool for the study of the New Testament. If reprinting were to be considered, it would clearly have to be adjusted to the text of a version in more general use. Since the New English Bible's natural successor, the Revised English Bible, failed to capture the market in the way that had been hoped, the publishers were obliged to recommend that any revision of the *Companion* should adopt the text of a more widely established version. For a number of reasons the New Revised Standard Version was the obvious candidate.

But it soon became clear that a revision would involve more than simply adapting the commentary to the phraseology of a new text. Substantial changes – some would say advances – have taken place in New Testament studies during the last thirty years. New methods of interpretation, and sustained research into the environment of Jesus and of the early church, have combined to correct former misunderstandings and to set old problems in a new light. Added to which, my own career of study and exposition, research and teaching, has enabled me to bring what I hope is a more mature and better-informed judgment to bear on many issues raised by the text. As a result, though some sections have received only light revision, others have been substantially rewritten.

The principles which have guided me throughout were set out in the Preface to the First Edition (1970), which is reprinted here. In this revised edition, the style and format have remained the same. Since it was these in particular that appear to have found favour with the readers of the first edition, it would have been presumptuous of me to think I could improve on them by substantial changes. All that is new in this edition will be found, not in the arrangement of the commentary, but in the details of its interpretation. Some changes are little more than stylistic improvements; others go to the heart of the interpretative enterprise. In any case, my purpose, now as before, has been, not to impose my own reading of the text, but so far as possible to lessen the obscurities, and to enlarge the possibilities of understanding,

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PREFACE

which lie before any reader today who is open to the fascination and the challenge of the writings which make up the New Testament.

I must record a debt of sincere gratitude to many people: to those learned reviewers of the first edition whose careful reviews have helped me to avoid many errors; to my colleagues and students, whose probing questions have honed my approach to biblical and theological questions over many years; to Professor Bruce Metzger, for courteously responding to my queries about textual and translation decisions taken by the NRSV translators; to Professor Stephen Mitchell of the University of Exeter and Robert Morgan of the University of Oxford, who have read sections in draft and given me invaluable advice; and not least to Dr Non Vaughan-Thomas, who has generously shared her secretarial expertise and enabled me to create a serviceable typescript on a sometimes recalcitrant computer.

A. E. H.

All Saints, 2003

NOTE: The English text referred to throughout is that of the New Revised Standard Version (1989).

Almost all the footnotes refer to questions of text and translation that are raised in the NRSV footnotes.

Wherever there is a break in the text of the NRSV, the opportunity has been taken to insert a sub-heading along the lines of the rubrics at the foot of the page in most editions.

The Index makes no pretence of being a concordance to the New Testament: it is intended merely to guide the reader to those pages on which each item or topic is mentioned or discussed.

In this edition I have added a list of Old Testament passages which are referred to in the text.

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Preface to the First Edition (1970)

In this *Companion* I have been concerned with questions which anyone may be expected to ask who approaches the New Testament in general, and the New English Bible translation of it in particular, without any previous introduction. These questions are not always the same as those which occupy professional scholars; yet it is mainly their research which has made it possible to attempt to answer them. All that I have learnt from them I gratefully acknowledge; and I am aware that there are countless things I have still failed to learn.

This book could not have been written at all had it not been for the generosity of the Governing Body of Christ Church, Oxford, which readily accepted that I should devote to this work the main part of my time as a Research Student of the House. It would also hardly have been completed had it not been for the stimulus of eight months spent in Jerusalem in 1966–7, which again I owe to the liberality of Christ Church, as well as to the hospitality of the Right Revd Campbell MacInnes, then Archbishop in Jerusalem, and of others in St George's Close, Jerusalem. I am also deeply indebted to the Ecole Biblique and its Director for permission to make use of its magnificent library during my stay in Jerusalem.

I should not have presumed to offer so ambitious a book for publication had it not first received the scrutiny of men wiser and more learned than myself. Chief among these is the Revd Dr C. H. Dodd, who was one of the first to conceive the project of a book such as this, who constantly encouraged me while I was writing it, and who patiently read and weighed every word of the typescript. After him, I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to the Revd Professor C. F. D. Moule, who read more than half the book in typescript and helped me with a large number of suggestions.

Others who have read parts of the typescript and made valuable comments are Père P. Benoit OP, the Very Revd Dr Henry Chadwick, Professors J. Duncan M. Derrett and E. R. Dodds, Mr E. W. Gray, the Revd J. L. Houlden, Mr Kenneth Pearce, Mr C. H. Roberts and Dr G. Vermes. Besides these, there are many others without whose help the work could hardly have been done: my colleagues at Christ Church, who patiently responded to my insistent questions on matters lying within their special competence; my pupils, who helped me to keep my mind fresh on the basic questions which confront any student of the New Testament; and finally some of the students at St Augustine's College, Canterbury, who helped me with the proofs.

Two men, who in their different ways helped me most, died before the book was published. One was Dr C. A. Simpson, Dean of Christ Church, who read much of the typescript, made characteristically candid and thoughtful

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comments on it, and sustained me through this long task with his warm-hearted encouragement. The other was my father: the small share which I may have inherited of his integrity, his powers of analysis, and his unusual ability to ask searching questions about what others take for granted, is largely responsible for any originality which this book may have. I have tried throughout to ask the questions which he would have asked and to seek the answers which he would have regarded as honest. The book, indeed, was written for him, and owes more to him than he ever knew.

To the memory of these two men I gratefully dedicate this *Companion to the New Testament*.

A. E. H.

St Augustine's College, Canterbury
March 1970