

The Second Testament A New Translation

June 20, 2023 | \$35, 312 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4699-3

“Scot McKnight’s translation of the New Testament takes us into the very world of Jesus and the apostles; it breathes the air of antiquity. Rather than try to make the New Testament too familiar, McKnight makes it sound foreign, like a distant land you are hearing about for the first time. The Second Testament is a monumental literary achievement that will enrich and excite readers for generations.”

Michael F. Bird, academic dean and lecturer in New Testament at Ridley College

A Daring Approach to an Ancient Text

There are many New Testament translations. What is different about this translation compared to what people are used to reading?

Scot McKnight: One of the most common statements about translations is that the *translator is a traitor*. People say this because translation theory often contends that the responsibility of the translator is to turn one language into another. I translated *The Second Testament* to supplement our common, reliable translations by offering a translation that intentionally works to minimize the transformation from Greek to English.

Tell us about your methodology around your translation technique.

McKnight: I want to give the reader a sense that feels more like a Greek text than our English translations. Standard translations will translate “When Jesus entered into the house. . .” when the word “When” is not in the text. All that is in the Greek is “Entering.” I leave it like that.

Words that have become heavily religious but were not “Christian” words in the first century, I translate in ways that make the terms less religious. I don’t use the word “Pharisee” because no matter how hard I’ve tried to get students and audiences to see that the name does not mean “legalist,” their perception is still affected. I use the word “Observant.” I hope to give the Pharisees a fairer hearing.

This project is similar to John Goldingay’s Old Testament translation, *The First Testament*. What are the similarities and differences between *The Second Testament* and *The First Testament*?

McKnight: In the UK, N.T. Wright’s translation was bound together with John Goldingay’s translation, but in the USA, IVP published Goldingay’s translation separately, which he called *The First Testament*. I immediately began reading Goldingay. I loved it. But I also recognized—as others have—that Wright’s and Goldingay’s approaches to translation were markedly different. In a conversation with IVP’s Jon Boyd I remarked on that difference. He said, “What do you think should be done?” I responded, “We need to find someone to do one like Goldingay’s.” Jon then said, “Would you like to do that?” I immediately said, “Yes.”

Goldingay and I are alike in de-jargonizing religious vocabulary; we are both more literal or word-for-word than thought-for-thought. On differences, I translated a Greek text and he translated a Hebrew (and a little Aramaic) text. That’s the major difference. I did what I could to keep terms similar, like “flatbread” for bread. When I began, I thought I’d be able to do more of that, like translating “instruction” for law in *The First Testament*, but that doesn’t work for the Greek word *nomos*. I translate that as the (Covenant) Code.

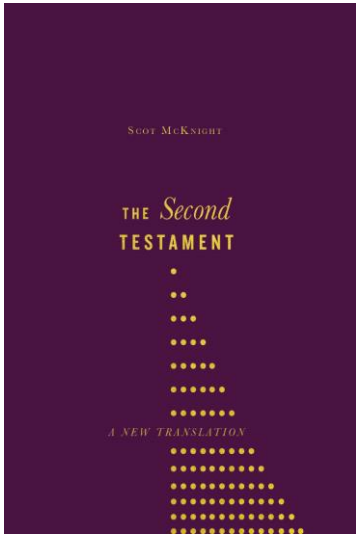
One of the distinctives of this translation is that as often as possible I translate a Greek term with the same English term every time it occurs. That is not always possible but not because I didn’t try.



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Q & A



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Tell us about your translation practice. How many hours does a project like this take?

McKnight: I spent Monday through Friday mornings for two years plus, plugging away one day, one word, one sentence, one chapter, and one book at a time. Some days I could translate 100 verses and other days 20 verses. I consulted other translations, but I relied mostly on lexicons and studies that focused on grammar, syntax, and translation. Once I was done with the first draft, I spent months going over the whole thing again.

What were some of the challenges you encountered during your translation?

McKnight: The biggest challenge is that most readers are too familiar at times with the New Testament. I hope to jar readers into asking, “Have I ever read this verse before? It sure doesn’t read like I have.”

Another challenge was the Synoptic Gospels: I did my best to translate exact parallels between Gospels exactly alike, and when they vary slightly, I attempt to give a slight variation. The most challenging books were the second half of the Book of Acts and parts of the Pastoral Epistles.

What are your hopes with this translation?

McKnight: I hope Bible readers will be given a fresh translation that makes them think and jars them from ruts in what they think a verse or word means. I hope they will gain a feel for how a Greek text reads as they experience what I have at times called a “chunky” translation. I hope readers will experience God and the gospel in a new way. I hope they will get out their favorite translation when reading *The Second Testament* and compare them and appreciate what this new translation does.

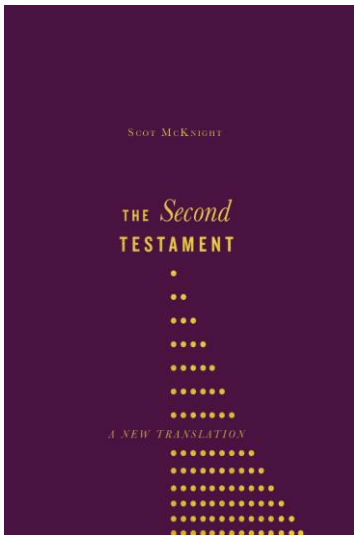


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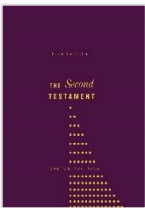
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"Startling. Scot McKnight's translation flips and scatters our settled habits of thought about the New Testament. McKnight's striking prose in The Second Testament compels the reader to un-hear and then re-hear Scripture's message. I highly recommend it, because after the shakedown, you'll find that you've encountered God's Word afresh."

Matthew W. Bates, author of *Why the Gospel?* And professor of theology at Quincy University

A Fresh New Testament Translation from Scot McKnight



The Second Testament: A New Translation by Scot McKnight

This new translation from Scot McKnight builds on what Goldingay started with *The First Testament*. In this translation McKnight

- translates the entirety of the New Testament from the original koine Greek,
- preserves the linguistic integrity of vocabulary, phrasing, and conceptual point of view for English readers,
- allows the New Testament writers' individuality and diverse language to shine through.



Scot McKnight (PhD, University of Nottingham) is Julius R. Mantey Chair of New Testament at Northern Seminary in Lombard, Illinois. He is the author of many books, including *Reading Romans Backwards*, *Pastor Paul*, *The King Jesus Gospel*, and commentaries on James, Galatians, and 1 Peter. He is also the coeditor of the *Story of God* commentary series and general editor of the forthcoming second edition of the *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*.



The First Testament: A New Translation by John Goldingay

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Most Bible translations bend the text toward us, making the rough bits more palatable to our modern sensibilities. In this Old Testament translation, John Goldingay sets our expectations off balance by inviting us to hear the strange accent of the Hebrew text unbaptized in pious religiosity. Translating consistently, word by word, this unique interpretation allows us to read the sacred text through fresh eyes.



John Goldingay (PhD, University of Nottingham; DD, Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth) is professor of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary but lives in Oxford, England. He was previously principal and professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at St. John's Theological College in Nottingham, England.

His books include *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, *A Reader's Guide to the Bible*, *Reading Jesus's Bible*, and commentaries on Psalms, Isaiah, and Daniel. He has also authored *Biblical Theology*, the three-volume *Old Testament Theology*, and the seventeen-volume *Old Testament for Everyone* series. Goldingay is a Church of England minister, and now that he is back in England, he likes walking by the Thames, rediscovering English food, worshiping in Christ Church Cathedral, and relearning British English.



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