

# The Authorised Version and New Translations

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I SUPPOSE that the most popular of all the proposals at the present moment is to have a new translation of the Bible .... The argument is that people are not reading the Bible any longer because they do not understand its language – particularly the archaic terms – what does your modern man... know about justification, sanctification and all these Biblical terms? And so we are told that the one thing that is necessary is to have a translation that Tom, Dick and Harry will understand, and I began to feel about six months ago that we almost reached the stage in which the Authorised Version was being dismissed, to be thrown into the limbo of things forgotten, no longer of any value. Need I apologise for saying a word in favour of the Authorised Version in this gathering? Well, whatever you may think, I am going to do it without apology.

Let us, first of all, be clear about the basic proposition laid down by the Protestant Reformers, that we must have a Bible which is, as they put it, “understood of all the people”. That is common sense, that is obvious. We all agree too that we must never be obscurantist. We must never approach the Bible in a mere antiquarian spirit. Nobody wants to be like that, or to defend such attitudes. But there is a very grave danger incipient in much of the argument that is being presented today for these new translations. There is a danger, I say, of our surrendering something that is vital and essential.

Look at it like this. Take this argument that the modern man doesn't understand such terms as justification, sanctification and so on. I want to ask a

question: when did the ordinary man ever understand these terms? ..... Consider the colliers to whom John Wesley and George Whitfield used to preach in the 18th century. Did they understand them? They had not even been to a day school, an elementary school. They could not read, they could not write. Yet these were the terms which they heard, and the Authorised Version was the version used. The common people have never understood these terms. However, I want to add something to this. We must be very careful in using such an argument against the Authorised Version, for the reason that the very nature and character of the truth which the Bible presents to us is such that it is extremely difficult to put into words at all. We are not describing an animal or a machine; we are concerned here with something which is spiritual, something which does not belong to this world at all, and which, as the apostle Paul in writing to the Corinthians reminds us, “the princes of this world” do not know. Human wisdom is of no value here; it is a spiritual truth; it is something that is altogether different. This is truth about God primarily, and because of that it is a mystery. There is a glory attached to it, there is a wonder, and something which is amazing. The apostle Paul who probably understood it better than most, looking at its contents, stands back and says “Great is the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim 3:16).

Yet, we are told, it must be put in such simple terms and language that anybody taking it up and reading it is going to understand all about it. My friends, this is nothing but sheer nonsense! What

we must do is educate the masses up to the bible, not bring the Bible down to their level. One of the greatest troubles in life today is that everything is being brought down to the same level, everything is cheapened. The common man is made the standard of authority; he decides everything, and everything has to be brought down to him. You are getting it on your wireless, your television and your newspapers; everywhere standards are coming down and down. Are we to do that with the word of God? I say No! What has happened in the past has been this : an ignorant, an illiterate people in this country and in foreign countries, coming into salvation, have been educated up to the book and have begun to understand it, to glory in it, and to praise God for it. I am here to say that we need to do the same at the present time. What we need is therefore, not to replace the Authorised Version with what I am, at times, tempted to call the ITV edition of the Bible. We need rather to reach and train people up to the standard and the language, the dignity and glory of the old Authorised Version.

Very well, my friends, let me say a word for the old book, the old Authorised Version. It was translated by fifty four men, every one of them a great scholar, and published in 1611.

Here, is another thing to commend it to you: this Authorised Version came out at a time when the church had not yet divided into Anglican and Non – conformist. I think there is an advantage even in that. They were all still as one, with very few exceptions, when the Authorised Version was produced.

Another important point to remember is this; the Authorised Version was produced some time after that great climatic event which we call the

Protestant Reformation. There had been time by then to see some of the terrible horrors of Rome, and all she stood for. The early reformers had too much on their plate as it were; Luther may have left many gaps; but when this translation was produced, there had been time for men to be able to see Rome for what she really was. These translators were all men who were orthodox in the faith. They believed that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and they submitted to it as the final authority, as against the spurious claims of Rome, as against the appeals to the Church Fathers, and everything else.

Here I say were fifty four men, scholars and saintly, who were utterly submitted to the Book. You have never had that in any other version. Here, and here alone, you have a body of men who were absolutely committed to it, who gave themselves to it, who did not want to correct or sit in judgement on it, whose only concern and desire was to translate and interpret for the masses of the people.

In view of all this, my argument is that *the answer does not lie in producing new translations; they are coming out almost every week, but are they truly aiding the situation? No*, and for this reason: men no longer read the Bible not because they can't understand its language, but because they do not believe in it. They do not believe in God; they do not want it. Their problem is not one of language and of terminology; it is the state of the heart Therefore what do we do about it? It seems to be me there is only one thing to do, the thing that has always been done in the past: *we must preach it and our preaching must be wholly based upon its authority.*