

ENQUIRE WITHIN

Question: *I read in my newspaper that 2011 is the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible and that there are plans to promote this Bible translation for schools and home study nationally. Do you think this is a good idea?*

Answer: This is the second part of the answer I started last month. Just let me remind you about what was said in the General Synod:-

“Following debate, the Revd. John Dunnett moved the following amended motion, which was carried by the Synod:

‘That this Synod

(a) believe that the 400th anniversary in 2011 of the King James Version (KJ) of the Bible is an obvious opportunity to celebrate the exceptional contribution which that translation has made to shaping the life, language and culture of this and other nations;

(b) commend the King James Version and other translations of the Bible as relevant and authoritative for personal and public instruction, reiterating the importance of continuing Biblical translation, scholarship and teaching;

(c) note with enthusiasm the events throughout the year being organised by the 2011 Trust and other bodies, details of which are to be warmly commended to Church and local communities; and

(d) request that dioceses, deaneries and parishes undertake local initiatives to celebrate and teach the Bible both within the Church and throughout wider society.’

Let us look at each section in turn:-

(a) It is true that the KJ version made a significant contribution to the life, language and culture of our country and many others far afield. That is worth celebrating. It might be a good idea to stay clear of too much Eng. Lit. emphasis, although this will be unavoidable in some ways.

(b) Here is a bit of a fudge. The KJ and other translations are lumped together as suitable for personal and public instruction. There is a doubt in my mind here, for the KJ is a difficult book to read and it

takes quite a lot of skill to interpret some of it for modern English-speaking people, especially children and those without English as a first language. I do agree that modern people can get a lot from understanding the Bible, but not just from reading it. (c) I would support a day or even a week of celebration at Holy Cross Church, and look forward to it. I would probably like to put a Holy Cross slant on what was presented, rather than just take what was offered or published by the 2011 Trust, although it would depend on the quality of what was on offer.

(d) I am already committed to a weekly teaching slot, based on the Bible, both the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament, in church as my sermon slot every week.

I enjoy this and feel happy that what I find in it really is relevant to the congregation before whom I stand, and when relevant, I attempt to put the original biblical context before the congregation as well as interpret what I believe it holds for us in very changed circumstances today. The part of the resolution about taking the Bible out into wider society is a little more tricky! Do they mean the KJ or any translation? If they mean KJ then I doubt if would be worth attempting it.

The problem with taking the Bible out into wider society is that, if the 2011 Trust has not noticed, there is very little consensus about religion on which to base a discussion. Some will see it as simply

proselytising, and regard it as totally unwelcome, whilst others will see it as a bunch of out-of-date and out-of-touch Christians still trying to flog a dead horse.

The truth is that the Bible is not the Word of God, but as someone once said, it is words about the Word of God, who is Jesus Christ. The emphasis on the written Bible can be restrictive and one-dimensional. Our role as Christians is not to tout the Bible but to present the world with ourselves as the Body of Christ, doing what he did, saying what he said, but through our own lives, words and actions, making ourselves the yeast in the bread and light in the world.

That is a much tougher assignment than promoting the Bible, but one which is the real work of the individual Christian as well as the whole Church of Christ.

