

# Bible Sunday, 2011

## Neil Richardson writes about Bible issues

The Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) makes annual provision for churches to observe a special Sunday as Bible Sunday. Normally, we don't take advantage of this but on Sunday 23rd October, 2011, the PCC has agreed that we may use this Sunday to observe the 400th anniversary of the publication of the Authorised Version of the Bible in 1611, or the King James Bible, as it is often known.



What we would like to do is to ask members of the congregation to speak about their experiences of the 1611 Bible, if they have any, and say what it is about it which either moves them, or puts them off, or anything else which is of interest to our congregation.

If you are willing to contemplate making a contribution, please speak to Neil or Peter Hounsell as soon as possible so that we can make preparations.

Many silly things are done to promote the Bible and silly claims are made about the Bible so that it has become almost invisible in Britain today except in churches. Even worse, the way some Christians use the Bible and regard it almost as a panacea for all our ills has brought the good book into disrepute to the extent that it is seen as an ugly or worse, silly and an unwelcome thing for many contemporary people.

However, when given the right treatment and approach, the Bible does contain some wonderful things and especially about community living and for Christians, we read the stories told by Jesus and learn about the issues raised by Jesus which are still compelling and true in the deepest sense of the word true! The trick is to understand the motives and context of the original writers and then to transpose their insights in our contemporary context. Only then does it start to make sense. But understanding the Bible like this is complex and requires some skills and study, some reference to the wisdom of the church's past teachers and saints and some regard paid to contemporary understandings of the human condition.



On a recent visit to Essex, I read a local newspaper and was interested to read about an Roman Catholic parish priest who had written about the Bible in his parish newsletter. This was the headline in the Essex Chronicle, Thursday 1st September, 2011:

## Don't use the Holy Book arrogantly, warns priest



A PARISH priest has criticised fellow believers who try and force him to adopt their ideas about the Bible. Father Paul Fox (pictured) of the English Martyrs church, Danbury, accused them of being "bigoted and stupid" in this month's edition (September) of Little Baddow News, the village magazine. Father Fox hit out, writing: "What an ego trip – so many try to use the Bible to prove they are right, finding a text to prove their idea and so condemn someone else if they don't change and become like them and fit in with their idea.

"No, the Bible is there to change you, not as ammunition to change other people." I am sure this is why our Sacred Scriptures have lost so much respect – bigoted and stupid people thinking they have all the answers wanting to change others and become like them. Oh dear."

Father Fox warned readers: "Never use the Bible so arrogantly as to use it to change other people's lives, thinking you have the one and only correct

interpretation."

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I wondered what the story was behind this little article, but in any case I tend to agree with Fr. Fox. The Bible is not a book with which to bash people in order to get them to see things your way. This attitude will almost certainly contribute to the diminishing of Christian influences in our country because it is so transparently brutal and nonsensical. The Bible is not a book of magic tricks or a wand that you can wave at something and get a miraculous result. It is an ancient collection of writings which can be extremely difficult to get to grips with, often very confusing, but ultimately, very rewarding if you are willing to put in the effort to gain the skills to read it with intelligence. But that is not, of course, the end product. The end of all this is that we come to live lives committed to the values of the Christian faith which we find there in the Bible, often masked and shrouded, but there and there permanently. "Seek and ye shall find!"



Waving Bibles in the air achieves nothing