

## PREFACE

The Authorized Version of the Holy Bible is the best-selling, most-read, most-loved, and most-revered book in history. This is beyond dispute. But doesn't the Authorized Version contain archaic words? Certainly. Should we therefore replace it with something else? Certainly not. This is what is disputed.

Since the publication of the Authorized Version in 1611, a steady stream of new and updated English Bibles have appeared. Although many accusations have been hurled at the Authorized Version down through the years in regard to the merit of its underlying Greek text, its many supposed mistranslations, and the character of its namesake, the translators, publishers, and users of every new English translation since 1611 have charged the Authorized Version with having archaic words that render it difficult, misleading, or unintelligible. But this charge is starting to wear thin, for every six months a new English translation of the Bible appears on the market with the claim that its modern, up-to-date, contemporary language is needed to make the Bible more understandable. Nevertheless, it is apparent that the Authorized Version does contain some archaic words that need explanation.

This book provides an explicit and comprehensive examination of every word in the Authorized Version of the Bible that has been deemed archaic, obsolete, antiquated, or otherwise outmoded. The result is both a fascinating and encyclopedic study of words—their meaning, derivation, usage, and significance. Two things about the title of the book require explanation. First, the word *archaic*, as it is employed in this book, is painted with the same broad brush that is used to paint the Authorized Version with the charge of being archaic. And second, it is not just the archaic words *in* the Authorized Version that we are interested in, for there are not that many of them; it is archaic words *and* the Authorized Version that

we are mainly concerned with.

The thesis of this seminal work is that the Authorized Version is no more archaic than daily newspapers, current magazines, and modern Bible versions. To further supplement the work and substantiate the underlying thesis, considerable reference is made not only to a wide variety of newspapers and magazines, but to four contemporary Bible versions: the *New King James Version*, the *New International Version*, the *New American Standard Bible*, and the *New Revised Standard Version*. Ample evidence as to the inconsistency of these modern versions will be presented throughout the text and summarized in the appendixes.

It is the contention of this book that the Authorized Version is the Bible for English-speaking Christians and the standard by which all other versions should be judged. Just as a certain vocabulary is necessary to understand science, medicine, engineering, or computers, so to learn and understand the Bible one must be familiar with its vocabulary instead of dragging it down to one's own level. And just as no one revises Shakespeare or Milton, but instead learns the vocabulary necessary to understand those particular works, so everyone who desires to read and understand the Bible must first become acquainted with the vocabulary of the Authorized Version rather than revise it. This book is unique in that it seeks neither to criticize nor correct the text of the Authorized Version.

# INTRODUCTION

The Authorized Version of the Bible is often lauded for its place in literature, its majestic style, and its poetic rhythm, but, unfortunately, these statements are usually qualified by the charge that the language of the Authorized Version is archaic Elizabethan English that renders the Bible unintelligible, difficult, or misleading. The archaic label painted on the Authorized Version concerns both words that are obsolete and therefore hard to understand as well as words that have changed their meaning:

While a major portion of the KJV is understandable to any person who reads English, because of the choice of words and/or the change of the English speech since 1611, some sentences in the Kings James will not be understood without the help of a commentary.<sup>1</sup>

Not only are there difficult sentences, but there are words used in the KJV which have passed completely out of use, so that they convey no meaning to the modern reader.<sup>2</sup>

More subtle, however, is the problem created by those words that are still in use but which now have a different meaning from what they had in 1611.<sup>3</sup>

The plain truth of the matter is that the version that is so cherished among senior saints who have more or less come to terms with Elizabethan English, is obscure, confusing, and sometimes even incomprehensible to many younger or poorly educated Christians.<sup>4</sup>

The KJV is no longer completely intelligible to all readers. It is no longer the most accurate and the most readable English rendering of the Word of God.<sup>5</sup>

Although the Authorized Version is also demeaned in regard to its supposed textual and doctrinal problems, they are not the concern of this book. As mentioned in the preface, the concern of this book is to provide an explicit and comprehensive examination of every word in the Authorized Version of the Bible that has been deemed archaic, obsolete, antiquated, or otherwise outmoded.

Critics of the Authorized Version should practice what they preach. In his chapter on the King James Bible in *The English Bible from KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation*, Jack P. Lewis not only uses the difficult words “pleonasm” and “malapropisms,” he also uses the archaic phrase “for want of understanding.”<sup>6</sup>

And just look at this sentence from a recent book by an evangelical publisher titled *Evangelicals and Empire: Christian Alternatives to the Political Status Quo*:

The label *Constantinianism* and the obloquies that follow have less to do with the emperor’s new religion or the putative obsequiousness of Eusebius’s panegyric of Constantine than with the co-optation of the church by the state—in other words, the Caeropapism perhaps best represented in Henry VIII and the ensuing Erastianism in England.<sup>7</sup>

This sentence is unintelligible to the average reader—much more so than any verse in the Authorized Version.

What critics of the Authorized Version fail to realize is that its archaic tone is deliberate, and has the effect of elevating the language of the Bible. When the Authorized Version appeared, as explained by the distinguished American philologist George Marsh (1801-1882): “It was by no means regarded as an embodiment of the everyday language of the time. On the contrary, its archaisms, its rejection of the Latinisms of the Rhemish Romanist version, and its elevation above the vulgarisms of the market and the kitchen, were assailed by the same objections which are urged against it at the present moment.”<sup>8</sup>

The procedure followed is straightforward. Each word from the Authorized Version to be discussed is listed in alphabetical order, organized into chapters corresponding to the initial letter of the word. After the listing of each particular word, a verse of Scripture containing the word is furnished to put the word in context. If multiple forms of a word appear in the Authorized Version, then additional verses are given that correspond to each part of speech

used. The discussion of each word begins with an inventory of what forms of the word appear in the Authorized Version and how many times each form is used. All derivatives of a given word appear under the root form appearing in the Authorized Version. Thus, not only is the word *satiated* found under *satiate*, but the form *unsatiable* appears there as well. After cataloging the various forms of the word, a brief etymology of the word is given as well as anything peculiar or interesting about the word under discussion. We are primarily concerned with how the word came into English, not the origin of the word in antiquity. Following this, a brief definition is furnished that often includes the wide range of meanings that many of these words have. The emphasis is on how words are used in the Authorized Version. After this, reference is then made to how the word in question is translated in four modern Bible versions. And finally, after mention of how other related words are rendered by these modern versions, evidence of the significance and contemporary usage of the supposedly archaic Authorized Version word is presented from various newspapers and magazines. For identification and emphasis, words in the Authorized Version that are under discussion appear in bold print as well as forms of these words when quoted from contemporary sources.

The modern Bible versions under consideration are four of the most popular: the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV), the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), the *New International Version* (NIV), and the *New King James Version* (NKJV). The *New Revised Standard Version*, released in 1990, is a revision of the *Revised Standard Version* of 1952. It is typically the Bible of those who would be called Liberals. The *New American Standard Bible*, issued in 1971, was first published as a New Testament in 1963. It is supposed to be an update of the *American Standard Version* of 1901. It was updated in 1995 and retitled the *New American Standard Bible Update*. The *New American Standard Bible* is generally used by those who could be termed Conservatives. The *New International Version*, first released as a New Testament in 1973, was completed in 1979 and updated in 1984. It is a fresh translation that is both ecumenical and eclectic. The *New International Version* is commonly used by those who would classify themselves as Evangelical. The complete *New King James Version* appeared in 1982 after a New Testament was issued in 1979. It claims to be the fifth revision of the Authorized Version. The *New King James Version* is normally used by those who could be

identified as Fundamentalists. Any reference made to modern versions in general should be taken as a reference to these four versions only. The standard abbreviations for these modern versions as well as AV for the Authorized Version will be used throughout the book.

The various newspapers and magazines referred to as containing the same archaic words as found in the Authorized Version are generally less than thirty years old. When the archaic words in question are documented, it is always in a complete sentence and is not just a quotation of an older source. The inclusion of any particular newspaper or magazine in this book should not be taken as an endorsement of it. A complete list of all the publications appears in an appendix.

The words under consideration in this book all have several things in common. They are usually corrected by most or all of our modern versions and are not just current words with a different spelling. Words like *ancles*, *plaister*, *counsellor*, *publick*, and *shew* are easily recognized as merely having an obsolete spelling; thus, they are not included. Other words like *excellency*, *enquire*, and *thoroughly*, which are equivalent to the modern forms of *excellent*, *inquire*, and *thoroughly*, are likewise not included. Sometimes the Authorized Version employs a compound word where we would now use two separate words and vice versa. Since this does not make the word archaic, only selected examples will be discussed. The Authorized Version also contains irregular verb forms such as *awaked*, *girt*, *shapen*, *wringed*, and *bare*. These are only discussed if there is some question about their meaning. Certain combinations of words, like the expression *by and by*, and words that together look like unusual phrases, like *for for*, are also included.

This book is not intended to be a Bible dictionary or commentary. When it comes to animals, precious stones, weights, measures, theological terms, and plants, they are only covered when they are corrected by our modern versions because of the perceived use of an archaic word. Thus, the length of a cubit is not pertinent to the purpose of the book since the word *cubit* is used by all of our modern versions. Likewise, the identification of a chalcedony.

Following the main body of the work, a series of appendixes both summarizes the information given about archaic words in daily newspapers, current magazines, and modern Bible versions and provides further information concerning archaic words and the Authorized Version.