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The Attack on Cultural Tradition: Literature and Language

A VIEW ON THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE*

by MARY H. GRAY

If the edifice of our Cultural Tradition is to be torn down it is as well to begin at that part where the destruction will have the widest effect, some part which is interwoven with the life of the people. The Holy Bible is such a part.

The beautiful Elizabethan English of the Authorised Version can be reduced by suitable manipulation to the rubble of mediocrity—or worse—so that the Scriptures will no longer be venerated; the Divine message of the New Testament when set forth in the common language of the street will lose some of its power; the greatest story of all time, bereft of its majesty and glory, will rank only as another tale that is told—or so, it seems to me, is the underlying motive behind the recent grand-scale assault on that great heritage from the past, the Version authorised by King James I. in the year 1611; I can find no other adequate reason.

The New English Bible, this latest attempt to modernise the language of the Book of Books, is not a one-man effort but a combined business, backed, we are told, by representatives from every religious denomination in Britain other than the Roman Catholic. It sounds impressive. Clerical scholars working on old Greek manuscripts, have been revising the text of the New Testament for the last 13 years, while a panel, who prefer to remain anonymous, (I don't blame them), have rendered the translation into an inferior brand of middling English.

The published result was thrown upon the world on the 14th March of this year with a tremendous bang. Every possible medium of advertisement was used to tell the public of the great event; one million copies had *already* been sold (to whom is the mystery) while another million were in preparation. Remarkable salesmanship! Customers waiting for the booksellers' doors to open; large orders booked in advance. Never, since the ban was lifted from *Lady Chatterley's Lover* has there been such a rush for any book! Yet can one believe, in view of the hundreds of half empty churches, that the public are so thirsting for enlightenment on the Holy Scriptures that they will wait in queues for this new book to relieve their thirst? Where is the drive coming from? Who is directing it?

Apart from its religious significance—if any—the New Bible is, of course, a huge commercial enterprise. Presumably costs have to be covered, and, to make it pay, it has to be well advertised. To achieve this every possible vehicle is pressed into the service—the B.B.C. (Radio and Television), *The Listener*, *Radio Times*, many of the churches, while some

of the leading national newspapers published special articles and editorials on the subject.

A small item of news which I happened upon even suggests that something suspiciously like a "take-over-bid" is in process, to acquire, indirectly, the right to print The New Bible.

The right to print the Authorised Version has, for the last 250 years, belonged to Eyre & Spottiswoode, the Queen's Printers. They are claiming that the patent extends to the New Bible. But Eyre & Spottiswoode is a subsidiary of Associated Book Publishers, and it is for the latter firm that Mr. Howard Samuel, property owner and publisher, is making a take-over bid. Can it be that the "public demand" for a new translation has been created; is, in fact, only a make-believe to stimulate sales?

However that may be, what is most disturbing is that the most claimant—even vehement—demand for the New Bible is coming from certain members of the Clergy. One of these is the Rev. Wm. Barclay, D.D., a member of the Joint Committee for Churches responsible for the new translation, also Senior Lecturer in New Testament Language and Literature and Hellenistic Greek in the University of Glasgow.

This pedagogue declares that "the New Testament in Current English is nothing less than a religious necessity." I maintain that it is neither a religious nor any other kind of necessity. His arguments in support are as weak and false as his statements are untrue. Here are two of his "compelling reasons":

(1) "People do not dress today as they did in 1611 . . . to be intelligible a book must speak to 1961 in the language of 1961." (This latter statement I question). (2) "In no sphere of learning has scholarship stood still . . . in recent centuries there have been discoveries of material contemporary with the New Testament which illustrate and clarify the language of the New Testament . . . Because of this a new translation of the Bible was a scholarly essential . . ."

I thought as much. Not a "religious necessity" after all but a "scholarly essential." Here we have the main reason which, I believe, actuated the professors and theologians (as they were to a man) who got busy on the job of translating.

Scholarship is useful in its way but, like theology, it has little to do with the ordinary life of the people. And I cannot see how this scholarly devotion will help by one iota the appeal of the Gospel message.

(continued on page 3)

*In the case of all signed articles in *The Social Crediter* writers are given some latitude to express their personal opinions. "We are not Theologians." The views with a theological bearing in the above article are the writer's own and *The Social Crediter* does not take responsibility for them.

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From Week to Week

From the very beginning of his exposition of the doctrine since known as Social Credit, Major Douglas recognised that the crux of world politics was the determination of the controllers of international finance to eliminate Great Britain as a world power, and to destroy British culture which was the not so obvious but very real barrier to world tyranny. It is no longer necessary now to argue the objective: the culmination is in view.

The "Cold War" is best regarded as a device to provide the military sanctions to buttress a financial system the effect of which is to force on mankind an ever-intensifying centralisation. It is openly stated that the major purpose of the Common Market is political—i.e. to remove administrators ever further from the place where they can be kicked in the pants if the results of the policy they administer are unsatisfactory to individuals or localities—such as 'Britain.'

The end is clearly visible—massive factory enslavement, making T.V. sets for non-Europeans, at a standard of living regulated by the necessity of providing for the 'under-privileged' majority of mankind. "You ain't seen nothing yet."

" . . . There has never been easy money to be made in Kenya; only the best farmers, the most skilled, experienced and scientific, make anything at all. Even now, Mr. Riley found profit margins low. The same land in the hands of inexperienced Africans would not merely cease to be profitable. Great parts of it would go to ruin, ceasing to yield even a subsistence. Who would profit by that? If it supported only the same numbers of Africans that it supports now, it would be at a starvation level. The situation now prevailing in the reserves—from which there are reports of famine—would thus be reproduced. The reserves are often said to be overcrowded. They are certainly abominably farmed. If the Africans' economic welfare were the only con-

26

sideration, there would be a far better case for handing over the reserves to the settlers than the White Highlands to the Africans . . ."

—*The Daily Telegraph*, June 16, 1961.

"Can Mr. Macmillan get away with it? Insofar as it is a matter of persuading the party to accept his decision to join, on reasonable terms. I think he probably can. The relationship between a Tory leader and his followers is more that of a magician with a mesmerised audience than that of a doctor with his patients. It is probable, therefore, that he can mesmerise the rank and file at the October conference to swallow the pill, however clearly they know it to be marked 'poison.'

—Peregrine Worsthorpe, *Sunday Telegraph*, June 18, 1961.

In an analysis of Soviet views after the Churchill-Roosevelt-Stalin talks at Teheran, Mr. Bohlen reported this attitude of the Soviet Government on the British Empire, as expressed by Stalin during the conference:—

'Because of British military contribution, the Soviet Government considers that there should be no reduction in the British Empire, but that on the contrary it should if necessary be increased by turning over to Great Britain on the basis of trusteeship certain bases and strong points throughout the world.'

—*Sunday Express*, June 18, 1961.

Perhaps after all there isn't a Soviet-U.S. Axis, or perhaps Stalin was just teasing.

"There is a terrible end to a novel of Balzac which related how a fireman seizes control of a train and, unconscious of everything except speed, sends it flying through the night regardless of stops or in blissful ignorance of the end of the line, while oblivious behind him a troop-load of soldiers sing patriotic songs.

"I will make no comparison."

—Lord Lambton, *Sunday Express*, June 18, 1961.

Studies in Words

"Verbicide, the murder of a word, happens in many ways. Inflation is one of the commonest; those who taught us to say *awfully* for 'very', *tremendous* for 'great', *sadism* for 'cruelty', and *unthinkable* for 'undesirable' were verbicides. Another way to verbiage, by which I here mean the use of a word as a promise to pay which is never going to be kept. The use of *significant* as if it were an absolute, and with no intention of ever telling us what the thing is significant of, is an example. So is *diametrically* when it is used merely to put *opposite* into the superlative. Men often commit verbicide because they want to snatch a word as a party banner, to appropriate its 'selling quality.' Verbicide was committed when we exchanged *Whig* and *Tory* for *Liberal* and *Conservative*. But the greatest cause of verbicide is the fact that most people are obviously far more anxious to express their approval and disapproval of things than to describe them. Hence the tendency of words to become less descriptive and more evaluative, while still retaining some hint of the sort of goodness or badness implied; and to end up being purely

evaluative—useless synonyms for *good* or *bad* . . .

"I am tempted to adapt the couplet we see in some parks:

Let no one say, and say it to your shame,

That there was meaning here before you came."

—C. S. Lewis in the introduction to *Studies in Words* (Cambridge University Press).

Magna Carta

This charter, the most complete and important that had yet appeared, may be divided into three distinct parts; one referring to the interests of the clergy, another regulating those of the nobility, and the third, those belonging to the people.

The Great Charter refers but little to ecclesiastical interests, since they had been settled by the charter already granted to the clergy. All that was therefore required was that this should be confirmed.

The privileges of the laity, on the other hand, were more uncertain, and more strongly contested; it was therefore necessary that they should be minutely investigated and separately conceded. The Great Charter is almost entirely devoted to the settlement of the rights, and the confirmation of the privileges, claimed by the laity. . . .

This charter is the first document in which we find a distinction established between the greater and lesser barons, and the higher and lower clergy; an important fact, since it may perhaps be regarded as the original source of the separation between the two Houses of Parliament.

The Great Charter has for its object also the interests of the nation as a whole . . .

It has been often said that the Great Charter would not have been supported by the barons had it not been for its influence on their special interests. This opinion is untenable; how is it possible that at least a third of the articles should have related to promises and guarantees made on behalf of the people, if the aristocracy had only aimed at obtaining that which should benefit themselves? We have only to read the Great Charter in order to be convinced that the rights of all three orders of the nation are equally respected and promoted.

—Guizot (*History of the Origin of Representative Government in Europe.*) Lecture VII.

(translation) Bohn's Standard Library, 1852.

In Africa

The Daily Telegraph, June 8, 1961, reports Sir Roy Welensky, Rhodesian Federal Prime Minister as saying, in a speech in Salisbury at the annual dinner of the Institute of Transport:

"I am prepared to acknowledge that great pressure was brought to bear upon Britain to change her colonial policy; pressure from Western as well as Eastern sources. There may, too, have seemed to Britain to be good reason to make the change and one should never fear change or innovation for their own sakes.

"But a succession of tragic examples has proved that Britain's new policy has failed in one essential. It has not ensured that the competence and experience of the colonial peoples have kept pace with their advance towards independence and, indeed, Britain's present policy is running away with itself.

"Ability and readiness to govern are now scarcely men-

tioned in colonial constitutional negotiations, and time after time the initiative is taken from her hands. The time has surely come to cry 'enough,' to stop this sell-out and re-establish the role of responsibility in colonial affairs.

"We in the Federation can only ask ourselves how many more failures will be needed to bring home to the people of Britain the magnitude of the disaster a few of their leaders are inflicting on many thousands in Africa.

"I believe that when the conscience of Britain is awakened this process will be brought to a stop. But in the meanwhile we may be forgiven for wanting no part in it and for standing firm in opposition to the break-up of the Federation and to the sacrifice of what we have built up."

THE ATTACK ON CULTURAL TRADITION

(continued from page 1).

But the Rev. Wm. Barclay goes further than this. "The real enemy of the new translation will be the selfish and sentimental attachment to the Authorised Version which is more concerned with the beauty of the sound than with the eternal challenge of the sense." (Is this true?) "A moving cadence is a poor substitute for a truth obscured." We shall see presently with what brilliance this modern English version illumines the "truth obscured."

In this century there have been many 'revised versions' of our 250 year old revered Authorised Version. These were mostly by individuals; but never in all their history has one been hailed with such tumultuous enthusiasm—even before its appearance—such a grand chorus of unstinted, unqualified praise as has been lavished on this one.

Here is a sample of the "blurb" from *The Glasgow Herald* on the day of publication of the New Testament part: "The magnificent, poetical passages of the Authorised Version are replaced by an almost impeccable modern prose with a new beauty of its own. Everything is modern . . ." There follow compliments from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and other church leaders.

Let us enjoy a few specimens (necessarily short) of this "almost impeccable modern prose" and admire its "new beauty."

Authorised Version:—"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Impeccable prose version:—"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye, with never a thought for the great plank in your own?"

Here are a few well-known texts "improved": *Authorised Version*: "I am the true vine and my Father is the husbandman." *New Version*: "I am the real vine and my Father is the gardener." *Authorised Version*: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." *New Version*: "For all alike have sinned and are deprived of the Divine splendour."

From Acts 7: The Martyrdom of Stephen:—*Authorised Version*: "When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

"Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord."

Improved Version:—"This touched them on the raw and they ground their teeth with fury. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, and gazing intently up to heaven, saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. 'Look,' he said, 'there is a rift in the sky; I can see the Son of Man standing at God's right hand!' At this they gave a great shout and stopped their ears. Then they made one rush at him." (Sounds like the report of a football scrummage; matter-of-fact even to the "rift in the sky").

The Bishop of Bradford supplies this "improvement"—1st Letter of John. *Authorised Version*:—"If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." *Improved* to read:—"If we claim to be sinless we are self-deceiving and strangers to the truth." Dear! Dear!

His worthiness the Bishop claims that "Many readers of the Authorised Version have become so accustomed to the stately but necessarily antiquated language that it fails to register."

So now that the stately language has been reduced to terms coming within the compass of the less intelligent, and acceptable to them, we may expect a further urgent and overwhelming demand for the new version of the Bible and that the churches will soon be overcrowded with the eager students who bought the million copies in such haste.

To help the big push, since the "people of all countries," as the write-up says, are demanding copies of the modern version, wouldn't it be a good idea to publish some in pidgin English to suit, say, the benighted natives of New Guinea?

Returning to our comparison of the "ancient and modern" here are the opening paragraphs of that magnificent 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians about charity (or love):—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." "Improved" version:—"I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal." Again (Improved):—"I may dole out all I possess . . . but if I have no love I am none the better." "Bestow" is apparently "archaic," likewise, "it profiteth me nothing." It is the chapter that is "none the better" for the new "impeccable English."

Amid the rhapsodies of praise for this first issue of the New English Bible I have found only one voice so far which one might regard as slight criticism. It is that of Professor Chadwick, Professor of Divinity at Oxford. As it was he who hailed its appearance in an article in *The Daily Telegraph* he had doubtless to say what was expected of him. This he has done, not exactly with his tongue in his cheek, but obviously with some disgust and contempt for the poor English.

He protects himself at the outset from the charge of "double-speak" by stating clearly just what this new translation is trying to do. "The translators' terms of reference" he says, "were to produce a fresh translation of the Apostles' Greek in the current speech of our time" (my italics). "The initial impression" says the Professor "made by the gospels is that the style, though direct and vigorous, has irritating lapses into cheapness, and that 'the language of today' as here used, is inadequate to the full stature required by the subject. We may not blame the translators (or the literary panel) for a deficiency which merely reflects the debased state of the contemporary usage into which they were instructed to translate the scriptures." But why perpetuate the debased state of the language?

"The evidence is overwhelming" continues the Professor,

"that the Authorised Version is no longer understood." (I cannot believe that). His conclusion is devastating: "The New English Bible is the Bible for the beat generation."

While agreeing with his verdict I ask why we must resign ourselves to the crudities of the New Bible to suit the "beat generation?" Because we suffer their incursion into popular music, and a few misguided persons think to attract them to church by entertainment pandering to their low-grade tastes, it is no reason at all why we must degrade our time-honoured Bible to accommodate them.

I am grateful to Professor Chadwick for providing the one and only criticism I have seen of this bold attempt to foist upon us an inferior version of our dignified, revered and holy scripture turned into almost colloquial speech, but regret his air of almost hopeless resignation. If a sufficient number of the interested public, particularly church-goers and the clergy, proclaim in a loud voice that they *will not tolerate* the introduction of the New Bible and refuse to use it, the promoters of the scheme will have to give way.

Next to Holy Writ itself, the noble English language is our most precious possession. Through it we reach to all other knowledge, past and present. When it deteriorates so does our culture. The Authorised Version of the Bible is part of our cultural inheritance, like Shakespeare and other writers of that golden age. Does anyone suggest re-writing Shakespeare's plays in the vulgar language of today? What a fiasco that would be! Yet we are to accept the Word of God, shorn of its ancient beauty, in the parlance of the street or market-place of today, for no other reason than that a handful of "progressives" thought it was time for a change!

What is needed in the Church today is not a revised Bible but a revived spirituality, the application and teaching of Christian principles in everyday life.

I do not doubt the sincerity of the translators, who are merely doing a job, but I do question the real purpose of the proponents of the scheme. I believe it is part of the surreptitious attack on our Christian way of life. The great and fine things derived from our Christian heritage are being deliberately destroyed—wiped out as if they had never existed. In obedience to some guiding hand the vandals have done their worst on every front—art, music, literature—so why not religion also?

Those Satanic powers "The Rulers of the Darkness of this World" who are intent on the destruction of our Christian civilisation have left nothing to chance; they are seeing to it that even the ancient custodians of culture in the British Isles—the aristocracy—shall be eliminated by astronomical death duties and sadistic taxation imposed as part of our monetary policy dictated by the International Money Monopoly. This Monopoly is, as we know, through its world Central Bank system, chiefly under the control of the bankers of the Self-chosen People who plan to be the rulers of their new dispensation.

The lowering of our moral standards has not come about by chance. It is a direct attack, and the shock troops to meet the onslaught are properly the churches, backed by the law. This is not the Britain of even 50 years ago. There are evil forces actively at work. Will a new Bible suitable for the "beat generation" provide the remedy? Or will the churches "put on the whole armour of God and go boldly into the battle?"