

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
Sunday 1 st July Trinity 4 Bible Lands Sunday	9.30 Family Communion	1 Kings 19 vv 15-21 p361 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
Sunday 8 th July Trinity 5 Sea Sunday	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 66 vv 10-14 p753 Galatians 6 vv 1-6 p1172 Galatians 6 vv 7-16 p1172 Luke 10 vv 1-20 p1041
Sunday 15 th July Trinity 6	8.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 32 vv 9-30 p36 Mark 7 vv 1-23 p1010
	9.30 Holy Communion	Deuteronomy 30 vv 1-14 p208 Colossians 1 vv 1-14 p1182 Luke 10 vv 25-37 p1042
Sunday 22 nd July St Mary Magdalene	9.30 Holy Communion	Song of Solomon 3 vv 1-4 p679 2 Corinthians 5 vv 14-17 p1161 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
Sunday 5 th August Trinity 9	9.30 Family Communion & Holy Baptism	Ecclesiastes 1 v2 p668 Ecclesiastes 1 vv 12-14 p668 Ecclesiastes 2 vv 18-23 p669 Luke 12 vv 13 -21 p1045
Services at St John the Baptist Halling & the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
Sunday 1 st July Trinity 4 Bible Lands Sunday	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 27 vv 1-40 p28 Mark 6 vv 1-6 p1008
	11.00 Holy Communion	1 Kings 19 vv 15-21 p361 Luke 9 vv 51-62 p1040
Sunday 8 th July Trinity 5 Sea Sunday	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 66 vv 10-14 p753 Galatians 6 vv 1-6 p1172 Galatians 6 vv 7-16 p1172 Luke 10 vv 1-20 p1041
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Genesis 29 vv 1-20 p30 Mark 6 vv 7-29 p1008
Sunday 15 th July Trinity 6	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen! & Holy Baptism	Deuteronomy 30 vv 1-14 p208 Colossians 1 vv 1-14 p1182 Luke 10 vv 25-37 p1042
Sunday 22 nd July St Mary Magdalene	11.00 Holy Communion & Golden Wedding Celebration.	Song of Solomon 3 vv 1-4 p679 2 Corinthians 5 vv 14-17 p1161 John 20 vv 1-18 p1089
Sunday 29 th July Trinity 8	11.00 United Parish Eucharist (preacher Paul Watkyn)	Genesis 18 vv 20-32 p18 Colossians 2 vv 6-15 p1183 Luke 11 vv 1-13 p1042
Sunday 5 th August Trinity 9	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Genesis 50 vv 4-26 p56 Mark 6 vv 45-52 p1009
	11.00 Holy Communion & Holy Baptism	Colossians 3 vv 1-11 p1184 Luke 12 vv 13 -21 p1045

<http://hometown.aol.co.uk/rogerknight/myhomepage/newsletter.html> & <http://hometown.aol.co.uk/RogerKnight/index.htm>

Copy Date August Magazine 13th July 8.30 am Rectory.

On Thursday afternoons we have a **Mother & Toddler** service at Halling at 2.00 and at Cuxton on the last Wednesday of the month at 10.45. **Sunday School** is at Cuxton Church Hall at 9.30 (not first Sundays or school holidays). **After School Club**, Thursdays @ St John's.



Am I Paranoid?

I was listening to the *Today* programme one morning recently when I heard what I thought was a shocking thing.

Apparently some council officer has told the Dean of an English Cathedral that, if he does not comply with the requirement to display

regulation *No Smoking Signs*, the council will close the cathedral down. This story may not mean very much. Anyone who reads the papers will be used to stories of small-minded arrogant bullies in local government pushing members of the public around. Some of us have had personal experience of this phenomenon! But could it be that the council would really like to close the cathedral down? I'm sure they would not want to

see it close as an ancient monument and a city centre tourist attraction. That would be cultural vandalism and financial suicide. I suspect, however, that government is becoming increasingly uncomfortable with what cathedrals and churches stand for – a set of values, a way of looking at the world which is based on faith in a transcendent and incarnate God rather than the contemporary secular liberal consensus.

The requirement to display regulation *No Smoking* signs is a trivial matter, but why legislate to compel churches to comply? Nobody smokes in church anyway! Government could argue that it cannot make exceptions for anyone, except that it has made an exception for the National Trust. They do not have to display *No Smoking* signs in ancient buildings. Why should we?

Voluntary organisations and churches used to be exempted from regulations which were more appropriate for large commercial undertakings. So were small businesses. Government used to value volunteers and encourage entrepreneurialism. Nowadays, however, Government seems to have made up its mind that it has to interfere in every area of life. No-one can be trusted. So everything is regulated. We are kept under permanent surveillance and teams of officials busybody their way around the country with clipboards, ensuring compliance with ever more detailed, petty and unnecessary rules.

The irony, of course, is that the very people (central and local government) who are so busy telling us how to live our lives and run our businesses and voluntary organisations are often the least efficient and effective bodies when it comes to running the things for which they are responsible. Any business with the government's record for late delivery, cost overruns and disappointing performance would quite rightly be forced to close down and any self-respecting voluntary organisation would be too ashamed to continue if it wasted so much money in achieving so little.

One of the reasons for all this regulation is, of course, our unwillingness to take any risks. The kind man who offers to help with the youth club barbecue might be a paedophile. The nice lady

who volunteers to be WI treasurer might be intending to steal the funds. Even a game as commonplace as conkers could lead to a tragic accident. So we need more surveillance and more regulation. Anyone who questions the need for more regulation will be confronted with victims of some accident or incident which might not have occurred had the proposed new regulations been in place.

Everything we do involves some risk. So *health and safety* can always be dragged in as an excuse for more state interference in your life and mine. It is, however, by taking risks that human beings advance. Danger is exhilarating. A risk-free society would stagnate and be pretty boring to live in. We tell our children that it is too risky to meet their friends and play in the park. So they sit in their bedrooms communicating with other human beings via the internet, learning about sex from porn sites and getting their adrenaline rushes from bloodthirsty computer games. Then we wonder why there are so many obese sociopaths about!

And why are we so afraid of death? Have we forgotten the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life?

Fear of terrorism and fear of crime give government two more excuses to interfere in our lives, monitor our behaviour and restrict our liberties. Fear is good in that a frightened population readily surrenders luxuries like human rights in favour of security. The Prime Minister has said that people likely to become criminals can be identified in the womb (from the sort of family and neighbourhood their mothers come from) and ought to be monitored and controlled even before they are born! Universal pre-school care and the fifty hour school week, in which children will be cared for by government or its proxies both before and after the present school day, may give parents the freedom to go out to work to earn money, but it also ensures that for nearly all a child's waking hours, he or she is supervised and guided by government or government approved bodies.

Governments claim to be concerned about our growing apathy towards the democratic process. In the recent local government elections, many seats were uncontested because nobody could be

bothered to stand. Where there were elections, only a minority of those eligible voted. More people vote in reality TV shows than in general elections. I am reminded of governments in ancient Rome who kept the masses happy with bread and circuses so that ordinary people would not take too much interest in politics. If they really wanted people to get involved in the democratic process, they would not be fooling about with online voting for those who cannot be bothered to walk to a polling station; they would give elected councillors and back bench MPs a real role in government instead of treating them as lobby fodder allowed only to rubber stamp decisions made in private by those who really control the levers of power. I note that the Labour Party is to have a new leader without giving the rank and file a say or a vote and the United Kingdom is to have a new prime minister who need not face a general election until 2010. This is strictly legal in constitutional terms, but is it in the spirit of democracy?

Rules and regulations bear down much more heavily on small businesses and voluntary organisations than they do on big businesses with plenty of staff and plenty of money to employ lawyers, buy new equipment and modify premises according to the latest fad. The result is that there is less and less variety. More and more, how we organise our leisure, what we can buy, how we choose to work, are organised by government and a decreasing number of major corporations. When you bear in mind that many of these corporations are substantial donors to political parties, you may well wonder what is going on. Who, for example, benefits when a small shop-keeper is forced to spend a month's takings on metric scales, even though his customers all ask for goods by the pound? Not him or his customers, but maybe his supermarket rivals benefit if he is finally forced out of business. The Co-op is part of the Labour Movement. The Sainsbury family has supported both Labour and the Liberal Democrats. The Tesco heiress (Lady Porter) was a prominent Conservative politician.

The Licensing Act has created real problems for sports clubs, voluntary organisations, small businesses and churches – more forms to fill in, more petty rules to comply with, in some cases considerable expense. It has also put a stop to the

spontaneous sing song or other popular entertainment. On the other hand, the Act has made life much easier for pub chains to stay open longer hours pouring ever more alcohol down the throats of young people with more money than sense. Do the brewers still donate funds to political parties?

Going back to where we came in, my concern is that government is becoming increasingly uncomfortable with what cathedrals and churches (and, to a lesser extent, voluntary organisations and other religions) stand for – a set of values, a way of looking at the world which is based on something other than the contemporary secular liberal consensus. The present Government is quite proud of having changed the ethos of our society, of changing our values. It is proud that I can now have homosexual sex in a hotel bedroom, even if my conduct disgusts the proprietor, the staff and all the other guests, whereas I can no longer have a smoke in the hotel bar, even if nobody else minds.

Churches and voluntary organisations might encourage people to think for themselves. I can imagine a philosopher like John Stuart Mill daring to point out that, despite all the evidence that you will live longer if you eat lightly steamed broccoli than if you eat chips liberally sprinkled with salt, it remains your choice, and Government has no right either to ban dripping or to instruct you to eat your greens. Can you imagine that Mill would be allowed anywhere near a school or a government-sponsored youth club?

Government values voluntary organisations insofar as they do government's work without costing the Exchequer anything, but they do not want independent, free-thinking organisations. Hemmed in by regulations and dependent on government subsidies, charities and voluntary organisations effectively become branches of the state. A religious AIDS charity had its funding taken away because it insisted on telling young people that sexual abstinence was one good way to avoid contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Catholic adoption agencies will have to close unless they agree to sponsor gay couples as adoptive parents.

I am not so paranoid as to believe that Government would want to ban religion. Many members of government are religious. Banning religion would be electorally disastrous. It would also fall foul of international human rights legislation. Government is very happy that people should be religious. Religion can even serve as an opium for the people. They want, however, to keep religion in its place. The place of religion is in the home – not in the public arena.

I think it is significant that there are so many more official attacks on Christianity than there are on other religions and philosophies. Why, for example, do local authority schools object to Christian pupils wearing Christian symbols, but welcome other faiths wearing their symbols as part of their diversity agenda? Why do councils want so much to remove all references to Christ from Christmas (or Winterval)? I think it is because Christianity is more of a threat to their version of the secular agenda than other religions in this country. Winterval is supposed to be an orgy of materialism – spend, spend, spend. They do not want some vicar spoiling it all by reminding people that the true message of Christmas is that the One Who had everything gave it all up in obedience to God His Father and in love for His fellow human beings.

We are more of a threat to secular values than other religions are because there are far more of us, because this has been a Christian country for 1,000 years and because we are still powerfully represented as part of the establishment. The Church is a sleeping giant. Government may be proud of its 24/7 society, with shops and offices open all the time (except government offices and police stations), but if all the people in this country who call themselves Christians refused to shop or to do inessential work on Sundays, that would be the end of that. Other religions are less of a threat and government values their contribution to our cultural and dietary diversity, but, even so, our leaders get very nervous when members of any religion try to assert that the principles they learn from their faith ought to

I vow to thee my country, all earthly things above,
Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:
The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best,
The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.

inform their public as well as their private life. Some “liberal” newspaper columnists have challenged the right of Christian and other religious individuals to occupy positions as government ministers.

Christianity has always had two complementary attitudes towards secular authority. On the one hand, we believe in order. We believe authority comes from God. We normally obey the Law. We pray for our rulers, even if they are not Christians. When rulers are Christian, we expect them to govern by Christian principles. This first view has tended to predominate so long as we have seen England as a Christian country with an established Church. (It has recently been pointed out to me that those who objected to Henry VIII’s and Elizabeth I’s reforms of the Church were prosecuted for treason rather than heresy).

The complementary view, however, is that if the secular state demands that a Christian act against what God requires, the Christian must disobey the secular state, whatever the consequences to himself. There might well be more occasions when this is demanded of us as Britain becomes a progressively less Christian country. Some examples that come to mind where a Christian might feel bound to disobey the present Government are these.

- A Christian soldier would not fight in an unjust war.
- A Christian teacher would not teach his pupils that promiscuity or homosexuality are morally indistinguishable from marriage or celibacy.
- A Christian doctor or nurse would not practise abortion on demand or euthanasia.
- A Christian civil servant would not tell lies to cover up government incompetence or political corruption.
- A Christian judge would not imprison a suspect without adequate evidence that the accused is guilty.

But, if we don’t judge society’s values by God’s values, by what values do we judge them? Roger.

And there’s another country, I’ve heard of long ago,
Most dear to them that lover her, most great to them that know;
We may not count her armies, we may not see her King;
Her fortress is a faithful heart, her pride is suffering;
And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase,
And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace.



You will be pleased to know that our street collection in the parish this year amounted to £1,858.86. Thank you to everyone who collected and

everyone who gave.

Thanks

I write to thank all those kind friends who contributed to my gift of flowers and cash in recognition of over 20 years as organiser of Christian Aid work in the parish. It was a lovely surprise and much appreciated but credit must also be given to the efforts of all those who each year knock on doors and collect the money. I hope that you will continue to support this vital work under the leadership of Steve Brown.

Mary Acott.

St John's Draw: £25 each to Miss J Thorne (23) & Mrs K Garrot (122) & £10 to Miss Bourne (109) – drawn by Mrs Hickling.

Halling WI

We had a goodly number of members for our resolution meeting and Evelyn was in the chair. Betty, Lily, and I all received our little birthday buttonholes from Evelyn and our meeting got under way. Minutes were read and signed, invitations for teams to two W.I. quizzes, Kingshill and West Malling, I expect we will manage one or other of them. Recipes for the lemon drizzle cakes that we have been asked to make for the Kent County Show were to hand.



Our 40th anniversary afternoon tea party is to be held in Jean Mattingly's garden on 27th June, this is for members only. Invitations have been sent out for our 40th Birthday Party on 19th June. We were pleased to receive a large cheque from the "Fire Brigade Pantomime Boys" Thank you all so much.

We all discussed the one resolution for the Albert Hall. "The closure of cottage hospitals", although we had been asked to try and find arguments "against" as well as "for" the resolution it proved very difficult and we decided to vote for it. We shall see what happens at the London meeting.

Sheila Miles and Sue Townsley from Ham Hill and Snodland W.I. had kindly come along to judge our little Produce and Craft show. The Flower of the Month was won once again by Evelyn with a very tall Delphinium, it much deserved to win. She deserved a medal for getting it there undamaged. The actual items in the show were pretty good, although we only had one lot of darning, we couldn't find any holes to darn, this day and age, if you get a hole, you "bin it." We had cheesy muffins, fruit pies, and painted flower pots. The knitted squares and oblongs have been joined together and made into a warm cover for someone in Serbia or the like. Betty Head was the overall winner, Well done Betty! Evelyn presented the judges with a plant each, and after refreshments we had a quick mind straining quiz, about Nursery Rhymes. This was won by Ann Heaseman, and our meeting was over for another month.

June sees our Ruby birthday party, Were have the last 40 years gone? Did I expect to see Halling W.I. still going strong when I started it in 1967? A lot of water has gone under the bridge, friends have come and gone, but we still have a lot of fun and friendship.

Phyllis.

Dickens' Country Protection Society

It seems far distant now, but the Barn Dance at the end of April, judging by the feedback, was another great success. Thanks to all who came and danced the night away and also to the band and organisers who made it possible.

The Society is concerned that the Planning White Paper contains 689 references to development, 44 to housing and only 4 to conservation. There are no references to agriculture and none to villages. The Society fears that this Planning White Paper could prove to be a developer's charter.



Kay Roots.

From the Registers

Baptism:

20th May

Samuel Louis Pattison

Gillingham

Funeral:

16th May

Anthony Edward (Gus) Stevens (74)

Meadow Crescent

Nature Notes May 2007

The warm weather continued into the first two days of the month then easterly winds brought cooler temperatures. On the 4th, I walked beneath bright skies up the path by the church where elderflower, may blossom and garlic mustard bloomed. Privet flowers were in bud. I crossed the fields where buttercups, frothy cow parsley, speedwell, clover, may blossom and elderflower adorned the scene. In Mays Wood bluebells were fading but herb robert raised their dainty pink heads to the sky. A few wood anemones with half open petals bloomed and white stitchwort held their heads proudly along the edges of the path towards Dean Valley. The magnificent beech displayed its beautiful green leaves. Germander speedwell, yellow archangel and ground ivy bloomed while ash trees were breaking into leaf. I saw wild strawberry flowers along the top of Dean Valley where the wind sighed in the trees. It was a beautiful sound. Horses grazed in the field by Purtys Shaw and green cherries had formed on the tree at the top of Six acre Field. I walked along the top path to the churchyard adorned with pink clover, buttercups and daisies. Blustery weather with grey skies and rain prevailed until the 17th when it became very humid but not unpleasant for walking.

May 1994 I drew white deadnettle, ox eye daisies and stitchwort. Heavily falling rain drenches the fields and woods, causing the frothy sow parsley to bend and bow over the footpaths. The warmth of the sun then invigorates it and once again it stands at shoulder height, shimmering like lace. Long grass in the churchyard grows around the grey moss-covered graves, masking the angular shapes of the stones and providing a haven for small creeping creatures. Nature is in control.

May 1996 The month of May has seen glorious sunshine with clear skies, but winds have been from the northeast. Spring flowers have filled the woodlands with their fragrance; primroses have grown in secret places, along with violets, bugle, stitchwort, yellow archangel herb robert and bluebells, which, in their beautiful carpets, have been of the deepest blue. The oak and ash leaves were very slow in breaking from their buds, but eventually they joined the myriad of colours of other trees. Looking across the valleys, the leaves' colours varied from pale grey through yellowy green to the almost black of the conifers. Seeds from the willow flowers drifted on the air and the song of the nightingale could be heard in our garden during the evening. As the month progressed, cow parsley bloomed in all its beauty in the woodlands and along the roadside verges, and then by the final days, we experienced a touch of summer.

May 1997 The month of May opens with very hot weather, while the fragrance of cow parsley fills the air. Celandines, ground ivy, bugle and white deadnettle grow in clumps along the paths of local woodland where birds sing lustily, while in the fields oilseed rape flowers emit a pungent aroma from their bright yellow petals. Radiant carpets of bluebells waft their delicate perfume through the air, while yellow archangel grows in greater profusion than I have seen in previous years. Winter returns on the sixth day with northeast winds and hailstones. We are experiencing April showers in May. The cold winds persist throughout the month but there is beautiful sunshine from clear blue skies. Early purple orchids are to be found in Mays Wood where the paths are now arched over by graceful branches of the trees, creating an atmosphere of mystery. The marsh is bedecked with frothy May blossom, purple vetch and pale hoary Alison. The heron glides across the river while shelduck sun themselves on the banks of the creek. Great spotted woodpeckers are feeding in our garden where the pond is aglow with yellow irises. The month ends with glorious sunshine but the easterly winds persist.

May 2007 After some very inclement weather, the temperatures rose to the 70s F. The flowers looked beautiful and birdsong filled the air. This was on the 22nd when we took Murphy to Halling by the river and leading towards the nature reserve. As we walked towards the heathland, I heard warblers in the reeds. There must have youngsters among them. Sadly the heathland had been fenced off for future building, the bridge over the river from Peter's Pit at least I have lovely memories of the flowers I used to see there. More warm days followed until the 26th when it was cool and overcast and it remained changeable until the 31st when it was sunny and pleasantly warm. I heard the cuckoo in the morning then again in the afternoon. I walked along the river path at the leisure centre with Murphy where I noticed vetch among all the other lovely flowers which I had recorded. The mudflats were visible and gulls foraged. The wind was from the south. The evening skies were a clear blue and the sun lighted up the garden and woodland beyond.

Elizabeth Summers.

Halling Bell Ringers

Halling ringers won the cup at Cuxton for the Six Bell Call Change Competition. This is the first time Halling have won, having come second five times. Well done! Thanks very much for donations towards the new bell ropes. We have already had a generous response, but there is still some way to go. So any further donations will be gratefully received. Peter Silver.

Dates For Your Diaries

7th July: Barbecue in Rectory Grounds. Gather from 6.00 pm. Music will be supplied by the Keyboard Vocalist Jasmine.

21st August: Barbecue With the Beaney's (95, Pilgrims Road)

11th July: 2.00 Teddy Bears' Picnic, Cuxton Rectory.

23rd August: 2.00 Teddy Bears' Picnic, St John's Church.

14th July: Concert in Jubilee Hall.

*31st August: Cheese & Wine With the Rector (The Rectory) 7.30 onwards.

27th July: Parish Bible Study at the Rectory 7.30.

29th September: Soirée after Patronal Festival Eucharist at Cuxton.

*7th August: Tea With the Wells (204, Bush Road) 2.30 – 4.00.

7th October: Harvest Supper at Halling.

*14th August: Coffee With Phyllis (9, The Street) 10.00 – 12.00

27th October: Quiz in Church Hall.

In September Frank Smith will be giving a photograph presentation at St John's illustrating Halling over the last 100 years. Watch this space.

*Events marked with an asterisk are to raise funds for Andrew Daunton-Fear our CMS link mission partner in the Philippines.

The English Bible I I

In the May magazine we took the story of the English Bible up to 1611 – the publication of the Authorised Version or King James Bible. We saw how it had been illegal to own the Bible in English during the Middle Ages, but, nevertheless many people had owned and cherished bible manuscripts secretly. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, scholars had obtained access to Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and Hebrew texts of the Old Testament, and this had enabled them to produce better translations, more faithful to the original, than the mediaeval Latin texts of St Jerome's Vulgate Bible. The invention of printing had made it possible to produce bibles by the thousand instead of by the dozen. The Protestant Reformation had made it a top priority to make the Bible available to the masses in the languages they could understand. We also saw how people had been ready to die a martyr's death in the cause of the English Bible.

William Tyndale was a major scholar, a great writer of English and a martyr. It was his translation which formed the basis of our much loved Authorised Version, which, we noted has been so successful because it fulfils the twin criteria of a good translation: it is faithful to the original authors' intentions

and it is easy to read in the language into which they have been translated. I should like to add three more points in favour of the 1611 Bible. Much of the Bible in its original languages is poetic and this comes across in the AV. Poetry is a level of meaning beyond the literal meaning of the text and this is important. Secondly, the AV is memorable. It is easy to learn verses and passages by heart because it is rhythmic. Thirdly, the AV is still probably the best known translation of the Bible into English and you can recognise quotations from it in sermons and speeches, as well as in other literature.

So why do we need new translations? Haven't we lost something in giving up one good agreed translation, which was, until recently, familiar in some degree to most English people? We have lost something. One friend of mine suggested that the Queen should commission a new Authorised Version, which would then be the version of Bible read in churches, taught in schools, etc. I fear, however, that we would never all agree to use it, no matter how good it was. I certainly have not given up on King James' Authorised Version myself. It is the version I generally read in my own personal devotions and I quite often read it out loud in Church. I think it is not only a good translation into good English, but I am also inclined to believe that the devotion of the translators who loved the Bible to the point of being prepared to die for its distribution to the common people comes through in the quality of the work.

But we need new English translations of the Bible for two reasons. The first is that we can now obtain more accurate translations than scholars could in 1611. Modern scholars have access to far more ancient manuscripts of the Bible and better techniques for deciding between possible readings. They also have more knowledge of the biblical languages of Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. So, potentially, we should be able to produce work of a higher quality than the best scholars of 1611 could manage. The other reason for new translations of the Bible is that the English language has moved on since 1611. Some words have changed their meanings. Some words and expressions have become unfamiliar and hard to understand. For some people, hearing the Bible read in old-fashioned language gives the impression that the Gospel is out of date and irrelevant to the present age.

But we haven't done it yet. We haven't got a new English Bible which fulfils the twin criteria of a good translation in that it is faithful to the original authors' intentions and it is easy to read in the language into which they have been translated. I should say we have two families of modern translations: the scholarly which make accuracy their main aim and the popular which concentrate on being easy to read. The Revised Version (1881 NT & 1884 OT) is probably the most literal translation of the Bible into English. It is also very hard for an English person to read, which helps to explain why it never caught on. Versions such as the Revised Standard Version and the New International Version (our pew bibles) are good C20 translations which accurately reflect the meaning of the Greek and Hebrew, while, as far as possible, preserving the rhythms of the original language (as does the AV of 1611). The New English Bible is an accurate translation in the idiom of educated modern English. It is not particularly easy to read well out loud, but it makes an excellent study Bible. The NEB quite often provides an accurate but non-traditional alternative translation of a particular verse. This can be irritating, but it is irritation which provokes an oyster to make a pearl. The Good News Bible (Today's English Version) sacrifices some fidelity to the original in the effort to provide a Bible which is easy for modern English people, who may not be highly educated, to read. So did J B Phillips 20 years earlier. I think these two bibles can give you a good introduction to a passage, but they are not good enough, on their own, for serious bible study. Then there are translations like the Message and the Living Bible, which really depart from the original in order to get the message across simply. By all means, use these versions to get the feel for a passage, but don't take their word for it, where they differ from the more scholarly translations.

Finally, I find myself a little concerned about some of the English translations of the last 20 years, versions such as the New RSV, the New NIV and the Revised English Bible. They try too hard, in my opinion, to be "politically correct", avoiding references to "men", "he" etc. in favour of "gender neutral" terms such as "people" or "they". Fine, if this was the original author's intention, but dishonest if not.

Roger.