

Services at St Michael & All Angels Cuxton		
December 5 th Advent 2	9.30 Family Communion & Gift Service	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 Romans 15 vv 4-13 p1141 Matthew 3 vv 1-12 p967
December 12 th Advent 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 5 vv 7-10 p1216 Matthew 11 vv 2-11 p976
December 19 th Advent 4	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 p692 Romans 1 vv 1-7 p1128 Matthew 1 vv 18-25 p965
	6.30 Nine Lessons and Carols	
December 20 th	7.00 Scout & Guide Carol Service	
December 24 th Christmas Eve	5.00 Crib Service	
	11.00 Midnight Mass	Isaiah 52 vv 7-10 p739 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201 John 1 vv 1-14 p1063
December 25 th Christmas Day	9.30 Family Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 2-7 p693 Luke 2 vv 1-14 p1027
December 26 th St Stephen	9.30 Holy Communion	Acts 7 vv 51-60 p1100 Matthew 10 vv 17-22 p975
January 2 nd Christmas 2	9.30 Family Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 p791 Ephesians 1 vv 3-14 p1173 John 1 vv 10-18 p1063
January 6 th Epiphany	11.00am Holy Communion	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p746 Ephesians 3 vv 1-12 p1174 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
January 9 th Baptism of Christ	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 42 vv 1-9 p727 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Matthew 3 vv 13-17 p967
January 16 th Epiphany 2	8.00 Holy Communion	Epistle & Gospel BCP
	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 49 vv 1-7 p735 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 John 1 vv 29-42 pp1064
January 23 rd Epiphany 3	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 1-4p693 I Corinthians 1 vv 10-18 p1144 Matthew 4 vv 12-23 p968
January 30 th Epiphany 4	9.30 Holy Communion	I Kings 17 vv 8-16 p358 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-31 p1144 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064

From 25th December – 2nd January (except Thursday 30th) Holy Communion will be celebrated daily at St Michael's at 9.30 am. No other services those weekdays.



Saturday 12 December
10.00am

Christmas Coffee Morning

Cuxton Church Hall

Services at St John the Baptist Halling and the Jubilee Hall Upper Halling		
December 5 th Advent 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Kings 18 vv 17-39 p359 John 1 vv 19-28 p1063
	11.00 Family Communion & Gift Service	Isaiah 11 vv 1-10 p696 Romans 15 vv 4-13 p1141 Matthew 3 vv 1-12 p967
December 12 th Advent 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 35 vv 1-10 p719 James 5 vv 7-10 p1216 Matthew 11 vv 2-11 p976
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Isaiah 5 vv 8-30 p689 Acts 13 vv 13-41 p1107
December 19 th Advent 4	11.00 Holy Communion, Stop! Look! Listen! & Baptism	Isaiah 7 vv 10-16 p692 Romans 1 vv 1-7 p1128 Matthew 1 vv 18-25 p965
	3.00 Carol Service	
December 25 th Christmas Day	8.00 Holy Communion	Titus 3 vv 4-7 p1199 Luke 2 vv 1-20 p1027
December 26 th St Stephen	11.00 Holy Communion	Acts 7 vv 51-60 p1100 Matthew 10 vv 17-22 p975
January 2 nd Christmas 2	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	Colossians 1 vv 1-14 p1182 Matthew 2 vv 13-23 p966
	11.00 Family Communion	Jeremiah 31 vv 7-14 p791 Ephesians 1 vv 3-14 p1173 John 1 vv 10-18 p1063
January 6 th Epiphany	9.30 am Holy Communion	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p74 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
January 9 th Baptism of Christ	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 42 vv 1-9 p727 Acts 10 vv 34-43 p1104 Matthew 3 vv 13-17 p967
	5.30 Evening Prayer Jubilee Hall	Joshua 3 vv 1-17 p218 Hebrews 1 vv 1-12 p1201
January 16 th Epiphany 2	11.00 Holy Communion & Stop! Look! Listen!	Isaiah 49 vv 1-7 p735 I Corinthians 1 vv 1-9 p1144 John 1 vv 29-42 pp1064
January 23 rd Epiphany 3	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 9 vv 1-4 p693 I Corinthians 1 vv 10-18 p1144 Matthew 4 vv 12-23 p968
January 30 th Epiphany 4	11.00 Holy Communion	I Kings 17 vv 8-16 p358 I Corinthians 1 vv 18-31 p1144 John 2 vv 1-11 p1064

Holy Communion will be celebrated at St John's on 30th December at 9.30 am. No other services weekdays 27th December – 1st January.



Tuesday 4th January

Exhibition of Christmas Cribs
Open House

9, The Street, Upper Halling.

9.30 Holy Communion Wednesdays@ Cuxton		9.30 Holy Communion Thursdays at Halling	
1 st December	Isaiah 25 vv 6-10 Matthew 15 vv 29-37	2 nd December	Isaiah 26 vv 1-6 Matthew 7 vv 21-27
8 th December	Isaiah 40 vv 25-end Matthew 11 vv 28-end	9 th December	Isaiah 41 vv 13-20 Matthew 11 vv 11-15
15 th December	Isaiah 45 vv 6-end Luke 7 vv 18-23	16 th December	Isaiah 54 vv 1-10 Luke 7 vv 24-30
22 nd December	I Samuel 1 vv 24-end Luke 1 vv 46-56	23 rd December	Malachi 3 vv 1-end Luke 1 vv 57-66
29 th December (Thomas Becket)	I John 2 vv 3-11 Luke 2 vv 22-35	30 th December	I John 2 vv 12-17 Luke 2 vv 36-40
5 th January	I John 3 vv 11-21 John 1 vv 43-end	6 th January Epiphany	Isaiah 60 vv 1-6 p74 Matthew 2 vv 1-12 p966
12 th January	Hebrews 2 vv 14-end Mark 1 vv 29-39	13 th January	Hebrews 3 vv 7-14 Mark 1 vv 40-end
19 th January	Hebrews 7 vv 1-17 Mark 3 vv 1-6	20 th January	Hebrews 7 v25 – 8 v6 Mark 3 vv 7-12
26 th January (Timothy & Titus)	Hebrews 10 vv 11-18 Mark 4 vv 1-20	27 th January	Hebrews 10 vv 19-25 Mark 4 vv 21-25

roger@cuxtonandhalling.org.uk <http://www.cuxtonandhalling.org.uk>

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

Copy Date February Magazine: 14th January 8.30 am Rectory.



Christmas and New Year

Christmas and the Holy Name

We all celebrate Jesus' birthday on 25th December. The 1st January is of course New Year's Day. (Since 1752;

New Year in England was officially 25th March before that.) The 1st of January is also the eighth day of Christmas, the day that the Baby Jesus was circumcised and named and that is the event we shall celebrate at our 9.30 am Communion service at St Michael's on New Year's Day next year as we do on every 1st January.

It all ties in nicely and reminds me of some words which probably began life as an early Christian hymn and which St Paul quotes in his Epistle to the Philippians (2 vv 6-11). We celebrate Christmas because the Christmas story shows how much God loves the human race. Jesus was *in the form of God. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God.* Jesus is the Son of God. He is God the Son. He reigns eternally in heaven with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, one God for ever to be worshipped and adored.

But (he) made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. God the Son became the son of Mary. God loves us so much that He became one of us.

Jesus taught us what God is like. He showed us what God is like. He taught us what we should be like and He demonstrated in His own person what it is to be truly human. But that was not all. It goes on to say, *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* Jesus loves us so much that He died for us. He died so that our sins could be forgiven and so that we could live eternally with God.

Wherefore God also hath exalted him. Because Jesus loved so much and because He acted in accordance with that love, God raised Jesus from the dead and exalted Him to His Right Hand in Heaven. The effect is that all who repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus are also raised from the dead and will dwell eternally with God in Heaven.

The whole creation is redeemed in Christ and He Himself deserves all our glory and worship and praise. God has *given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
Roger.

Thanks For Your Support In Paying Our Debts

Donations continue to come in towards paying off our parish share debt (£22,000). The hope is that every adult in the parish will donate £5 to keep us financially viable. So far we have collected £1,201. So there is still a long way to go, but thanks to all those who have donated so far. Any further donations please to rector, treasurer or churchwardens. Any cheques should be payable to *Cuxton and Halling PCC*. If you can *Gift Aid* your donation, that adds about 25% to its value.

A Christmas Greeting from Lily Hesketh

Lily is sorry that she can no longer write properly but would like to use this magazine to wish all her friends a Merry Christmas and to thank them for their help with lifts throughout the year.

Children's Nativities

On Wednesday 22nd December at Cuxton (St Michael's Angels) and Thursday 23rd at Halling (Thursday's Children) children are invited to attend the 2.00 pm children's service dressed as characters from the Christmas Story for an impromptu nativity play.



From Your Halling WI Correspondent.

Sorry folk, no W.I. report from Halling this month. I have been sipping sangria on the seashore of sunny southern Spain. As one who has never been to Spain before, I was mildly surprised as it wasn't all Benidorm and boozy Brits. In fact where I went it was beautiful. So many wise people live in Spain, building their little (and large) houses on the rocks. The valleys were so deep they would have been swept away in a deluge. I began to wonder where the plains were. (It always rains on the plains in Spain so the song goes). We went to a little town called Rhonda, built over a crevasse. The guide called it a gorge. We walked over a bridge crossing the gorge and there in all its glory was the plain, just like a natural patchwork quilt with oranges, avocados, olives and brown cultivated fields where the sunflowers and sugar beet had been. We went passed a honey factory where they make honey out of sugar. (That's cheating.) The Brits could learn a little from the Spaniards with regards to road building, high viaducts joining mountains together, and long tunnels under the same

mountains, inside the tunnels, just like fairy land with multicoloured street lights.

I was disappointed with the Spanish Paella, too much carbohydrate and not enough protein (I put lots of seafood in mine and mine are always yellow. The grey rice isn't half so appetising.)

We gave the Rock, Gibraltar a wide berth. I can go to Medway to find Marks and Spencer's and Morrison'. Shopping wasn't on my priority list. Instead, we stayed in the pretty little town of Mijas, and I had a pint of shandy in a tiny English café. It went down a treat and didn't touch the sides. The temperature was 26 and there was snow on the high mountains.

Everything has to come to an end. Now it is back to the grindstone. November W.I., we may have a laugh or two with Mrs Martin's Humorous Verse, the competition, oh dear, a flower arrangement using the last flowers in your garden. I am afraid mine caught a very bad cold while I was sunning in Spain. C'est la vie. Phyllis.

Nature Notes October 2010

The month begins very wet, the rain falling well into the evening. Brave birds come to feed for a while and a squirrel feeds on the nuts. For several days skies are grey and rain falls then 6th brings some pleasant sunshine and the trees along the Halling by-pass are beautiful displaying their Autumn colours. The 7th is beautiful and I spend it with a friend at Knole Park. After visiting the house, we walk in the grounds where deer roam freely. I notice bracket fungus at the base of a tree trunk. Magpies and jackdaws hop across the fields. As we walk round the outside of the house I'm

aware of the beautiful Autumn leaves on the variety of trees and the sun continues to shine. Eventually grey clouds drift across the sky in the late afternoon. The early morning of 8th is grey but by the time we take Murphy to Cobtree Manor Park the sun's rays beam through the trees. It feels very warm. We walk in Cobtree Manor Park again on 11th when the sun beams down from clear blue skies and the trees are looking ever more beautiful with their yellows, golds reds and purples. The wet grass sparkles with droplets of water resembling diamonds. The 13th is sunny but

chilly because the wind blows from the north east. By 15th the holly tree in the garden is bearing bright red berries. On 16th cold north east winds continue to blow as I walk, in bright sunshine, to the village. I make my way along Bush Road to the alley which takes me up the hill to Mays Wood. I stand and look back to the village. Everything around me is so still with the occasional sound of a bird. Hips and haws along the hedgerows are a deep red. Grey clouds drift across the sky hiding the sun. I continue through part of the wood then cross Church Fields where contented cows graze. Bristly ox tongue and a few mallow flowers bloom. The evening skies are clear and a half moon shines brightly. The air is cold. In Cobtree Manor Park on 18th I notice a rhododendron bush bearing white flowers. The next day we walk with Murphy at Bluewater where the trees are displaying their Autumn colours. On 21st the sun beams down from a clear blue sky. A layer of frost covers the grass in the early morning but it soon melts in the warmth of the sun. The morning sky on 22nd is stippled with cloud then the sun shines brightly as I drive to Addington where the trees are looking beautiful. In the evening, once darkness has fallen, clouds gather causing the moon to become misty. The following evening a very bright moon lights up the night sky. The morning of 24th is bright and clear but a north east wind blows and I spend time in the shelter of the garden. Droplets of water on spiders' webs sparkle like diamonds. In the late afternoon, I watch a large crow as it perches on a branch of a dead elm on the embankment. It is a very cold night with clear skies and a bright moon. The 26th is wet and cold. The morning of 27th is grey and drizzly as we drive to Bluewater. The clouds eventually part to reveal welcome sunshine. The early morning sky of 28th is a fiery red which then becomes grey with cloud but it

remains very mild. I walk along the road with Murphy as the sun shines into our faces. Darkness falls so early now. The 29th remains quite mild and there is some brightness. I watch birds in the garden as they come to feed. A wood pigeon sees off a greenfinch while chaffinches peck from the grass. The afternoon becomes very grey and rather chilly. After early sunshine the next morning, heavy showers fall in the late morning. In the afternoon I walk round a field near Cobham with Murphy then along Bush Road where I view the beautiful colours in Mill Hill Wood. I walk across a field to Tomlins Lane from where I climb up from Dean Valley where sheep are grazing. Haws are a dark red. I stand to drink in the beauty and the silence before continuing through part of Mays Wood to Church Fields which are lit up by the sun of the mid-afternoon. Cows lie on the grass chewing the cud and taking no notice of me as I pass. Magpies congregating near the gate fly away at my approach. Purple sloes, their skins bearing a white sheen, hang on their twigs. Hawthorn leaves are yellow and the branches are covered in golden lichen. Pheasants scuttle across the field. A silver birch tree near the churchyard bears golden leaves and the first Autumn tints are displayed on an ash tree. Eventually I walk home along the road with the dipping sun beaming its golden rays into my face.

British Summertime ends for another year. The final morning of the month is damp and rain falls but as I drive to Halling Church I'm aware of the beautiful Autumn colours and see even more beauty as I drive home along the Halling by-pass. The rain ceases, and later in the afternoon, I deliver Parish magazines when there is some sunshine and it feels very mild. Darkness falls very early now that we have returned to Greenwich Mean Time. Elizabeth Summers.

The Kingdom of God In No Strange Land
Francis Thompson

O world invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air-
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!-
The drift of pinions, would we harken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;-
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'Tis your estranged faces,
That miss the many splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry;-and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry,- clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

From the Registers

Baptisms:

3 rd October	Caitlin Patricia May Wenham	Acre Grove
10 th October	Emily Sarah Barber	Charles Drive
10 th October	James Russell Finley Denney	Low Meadow
17 th October	Aaron Jack Maisey	Crofton
31 st October	Jessica Emily Robertson	Charles Drive

Funerals:

22 nd October	Philip Jesse Martin (90)	Low Meadow
29 th October	Winifred Grace Cooper (82)	Rochester Road North Halling
3 rd November	Diane Downs (71)	Charles Drive
3 rd November	Cyril Godding (81)	North Halling

Confirmation

Please remember in your prayers Michael and Pauline Lofthouse who were confirmed at Frindsbury at 6.30 pm on 21st November.

Please pray also for those who may be considering Confirmation at Halling 24th June next year.

Thanks

Thanks to all those of you who have contributed towards the cost of cutting cemetery and churchyard grass again this year. (If you want to help next year, please make cheques payable to Cuxton & Halling PCC.) Thank you also if you have kept graves tidy and done any general tidying up. It all makes a big difference.

Please take away dead flowers, faded wreaths, etc., and don't dump them in a corner of the churchyard or throw them over the wall. They look unsightly and they stay there until some kind soul (not me) rolls up his sleeves and clears up what is other people's mess. Roger.



Dickens' Country Protection Society

Season's Greetings to all our members. Thanks for your continued support.

St John's Draw: £5 each to Mrs Homewood (36), Mrs Baker (46), Mr Mitchell (69), Mrs Waghorn (156) & Mrs Brunger (159) – drawn by Mr Silver.

Church Hall Draw: £40 to Grace Pearce, drawn by Elizabeth Summers.



CUXTON W.I.

Our meeting on the 4th November was attended by 34 members and we enjoyed an interesting talk by Mrs. Susan Levett about the tapestries and textiles in the keeping of the National Trust at their houses. She had a interesting fund of stories regarding the tapestries many of which dated back to medieval times right up to the William Morris of Arts of Crafts era. Many of the tapestries were based on

ancient myths and legends and used to promote wealth and status of the owners. Our October meeting was a great success having our own Dabble Day for the evening with tasters of flower arranging, card making, embroidery and balls for necklaces. A good time was had by all.

Our next meeting on the 2nd December will be our Christmas Party

A Miracle? Did you hear about the dumb man who saw a wheel and spoke; the blind man who touched a hammer and saw or the deaf man who met a flock and herd?

More Seriously: The world is fragile. Use prayerfully.

News from Cuxton Community Infant school.

Dear Friends of our School,

Already in November and the weather really is now turning colder. It seemed that over half term the foliage on the trees went from green to the beautiful autumnal colours they are now, although I hasten to say our beech trees have really shed over the last couple of weeks. The children are delighted with this and have been kicking and picking them up in handfuls. We have also had bark rubbings, leaf prints and hedgehog handprints made.

We had a very successful Maths week in school, which began with a theatre company performing and doing all sorts of maths tricks with the children. Children then during the week had the opportunity to focus on different areas of Maths including measure, weight, capacity, shape, tessellation, symmetry, problem solving, money and calculations. Lots of practical activities and loads of fun. For many of us, myself included, Maths at school involved squared books and counters and rows of sums!

We then had two open days, showing prospective parents around the school and telling them a little about us. Lovely compliments and I felt really proud of the children and staff as we went around as there was such a lovely warm hard working atmosphere in all the rooms.

Children have been working very hard in classes. Topic work at the moment includes, Diwali, Remembrance Day, Light and Dark, covering sources of light and light in Christianity. We have also been thinking about Fireworks and the Gun Powder plot and Firework safety.

Lastly, Poetry has been a focus in classes, with children reading and writing poems. Here are some!

I like the feel of the door
because it is metal

I like the taste of the school
dinner dissolving in my mouth

I like the sound of the teacher
when she says well done to me

I like the smell of carrot
because it is yummy

I like the sight of books
because they teach us.

By Jennifer

I like the taste of my packed
lunch munching in my mouth

I like the smell of school
dinners flickering up my nose

I like the sound of the bells
dingling in my ears

I like the feel of the floor
crumbling on my hands

I like the sight of the sun
shining on my face.

By Henry

I went to the zoo and what did
I see?

I saw an elephant, squirting at
me.

I went to the park and what did
I see?

I saw a dog, barking at me.

I went to the woods and what
did I see?

I saw a woodpecker, pecking a
tree.

I went to the beach and what
did I see?

I saw a crab, pinching at me.

I went to Lego land and what
did I see?

I saw a dragon ride,
frightening me.

By Ranscombe Class.

As always, take care. Best wishes, staff and children at Cuxton Infants. Sandra Jones

Lunches & Services – Christmas & Epiphany

The parish lunch in the church hall on Wednesday 1st December at 12.00 is our Christmas lunch. Please feel welcome to join us in return for a modest donation.

On Thursday 6th January (Epiphany), there will be Holy Communion at St John's at 9.30 am and at St Michael's at 11.00 am. There will be a bring and share lunch in the church hall at 12.00, We may have an important guest at either of the services and/or the lunch. It is too early to say. There will be NO parish lunch on Wednesday 5th January, but we shall be back to normal in February.

???Any Questions???

Advance Notice.

20th January Next Year.

Panel to include Mark Reckless, MP for Rochester & Strood; The Very Rev'd Adrian Newman, Dean of Rochester; Rev'd Alan Wharton, Minister Sevenoaks URC, Cllr Glynn Griffiths (deputy Labour leader Medway Council & PCT board member) & ??? Chairman David Summers.

POSTAGE STAMPS REQUIRED FOR CHARITY

Cuxton and Halling Scout Group (including Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorers) are collecting used (or mint) postage stamps on behalf of two charities – Guide Dogs for the Blind and OCD UK. Please let us have any British or Foreign stamps you could collect for us – we will be most grateful. They should be carefully cut off envelopes leaving about ¼ inch (6mm) around the edge of the stamp and put in a container. They can be dropped off during meetings at the Scout Hall, Bush Road, Cuxton (just leave with a leader) or dropped through the letterboxes of the following Cuxton addresses: 10 Charles Drive, 6 Whitleaves Rise, 26 James Road, 5 Hillcrest Drive, 177 Bush Road and 11 Ladywood Road from where they will be processed and despatched. We are hoping to send some before Christmas but would like you to keep collecting for us indefinitely. We have had a good response so far.

Thank you in advance for your help and support

Confessions of an AV Addict

In 1980, helped by a supportive community, I nearly weaned myself off the AV. On my own after 1987, however, I soon found I couldn't manage without twice daily maintenance doses, though they were usually taken alone and mostly just for my own personal use. Hitting a personal crisis a few years ago, however, I had a total relapse and now just can't help myself mainlining on the AV unashamedly and in public on up to six days a week – often more than once.

I refer, of course, to the Authorised Version of the Bible (or King James Version) which celebrates its 400th anniversary next year. Even if you aren't an addict like me, you should celebrate.

They don't want you to read the Bible. The Bible is powerful and people in power recognise that it can be dangerous in what they consider to be the wrong hands. So, back in the Middle Ages, the Bible was only officially available in Latin – a language which most people didn't understand. [In fact, even in the Middle Ages, there were English translations (attributed to John Wycliffe) copied by hand and circulated secretly at great risk to all those involved. Portions of Scripture in English are thought to have been more numerous than any other work of literature in circulation in this country before the invention of printing.]

Even today in some Communist, Moslem and other totalitarian states it is illegal to own or to share a Bible with other people. The Bible empowers people. It gives them a more powerful and more credible ideology than any political system or philosophy devised by human beings.

They are more subtle in modern Britain. They just treat the Bible as irrelevant. It is sold freely and cheaply in a host of editions and translations and it is simply disregarded as if it didn't matter. The Bible is thus robbed of its power without anyone having to go the trouble of persecuting Christians – a tactic which history shows generally has the opposite effect to the one intended.

Things were not always thus, however. Back in Tudor times there were influential people in this country who believed passionately that the Bible ought to be available in English to all English people. They were prepared to work hard for this goal and willing to suffer to see it happen. King Henry VIII blew hot and cold on the project of an English Bible. At one time he ordered that there should be a Bible in English in every parish church for anyone to read. On the other hand, he persecuted England's greatest Bible translator, William Tyndale, and was instrumental in his martyrdom.

Several English translations of the Bible were produced in the Tudor period, but everyone of them seemed (by other parties) to be biased in favour of one or other theological opinion. When King James I came to the

throne, he got the leading members of the various religious factions to come together and produce a translation of the Bible that would be acceptable to all English Christians. The result in 1611 was the publication of the Authorised Version or King James Version of the Bible.

This version has had enormous influence. Quotations from it form one of the largest sections of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations (up there with Shakespeare and the Book of Common Prayer.) It has encouraged literacy. People studied reading and taught their children to read because they wanted to read the Bible. We hear tales of the enormous efforts people went to in order to obtain a copy. The AV was read in every Church and nearly every home in England had one. Often the family Bible was read daily at family prayers. It was taught in schools and people were encouraged to learn chunks of it by heart. Simply because so many people read the AV from every level of society, it has had a huge influence on the development of the English language.

The fact of the Bible in English formed our country as it is – our faith, our ethics, our ethos. No-one can tell its effects on millions of individual readers as they encountered God in its pages, how they were inspired, encouraged, warned, guided, strengthened, upheld.

In the pages of the Bible, we meet Jesus the Word of God made flesh. We meet the Son Who sets us free.

Nobody can doubt the part the Authorised Version has played in the lives of English speaking people all over the world for four centuries. Some people, however, believe that the AV is now history, a glorious bit of our history, but no longer suited to the modern age. They may be right. It is a matter of opinion but I don't find myself able to agree with them. There are several things to consider when judging a translation of the Bible.

The first is accuracy. Given that for most of the Bible's history, it was copied by hand rather than printed, errors have crept into the text. Bible translators first have to establish, as nearly as they can, the authentic original text. Then, from their knowledge of the original languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), they have to translate the original text into English.

I have to admit that modern scholars have much better texts to work from and a better understanding of the biblical languages than were available to the translators of 1611. This means that scholarly translations like the Revised, Revised Standard and New International Versions, the Jerusalem Bible and the New English Bible (in their several revisions) are usually more accurate than the AV. I cannot, however, think of any example where adopting a new translation's rendering of the text would make any substantial difference to what we believe as Christians.

The AV is at least readable in English and out loud, whereas, it seems that, the more scholarly and accurate a translation, the harder it is to read.

The second point about a Bible translation is that it needs to be intelligible to the intended readers. The translator not only puts the text into English, but rewrites the text in idiomatic modern English. This procedure makes it easier to understand, but inevitably runs the risk of importing too many of the translator's own ideas. J B Phillips and the Good News Bible (and a host of others) make the Bible much easier to read, but at the cost of oversimplifying and the risk of bias in favour of particular points of view.

I agree that the AV requires some effort to read. It preserves as far as possible the rhythms and structures of the original biblical languages and it uses a form of English which is now out of date. I think it is worth it, however. We live in a world in which everything is dumbed down. We are not to expect people to make an effort. Children especially are to be addressed at their own level. I believe this is profoundly wrong. Children want to grow up. Adults are better for being challenged. It is good for us to try. If you don't grow, you die. If you don't advance, you retreat. You can't stay where you are. It is an insult to assume that other people – children or adults – are dull and lazy. Education is a good thing!

The AV might be less readable than some of these “popular” translations, but it is much closer to the original and it’s English isn’t so hard to understand if you are prepared to engage your brain.

Translations of the Bible ought also to be memorable. I think the AV scores here. Its rhythms certainly stick in my mind. I don’t know many people who can quote the Bible from memory these days, but those who can still mostly quote the AV. There are so many new translations. People no longer try to learn things by heart as much as they used to. The new translations don’t seem to stick in the mind.

Meaning is not, however, just about the literal accuracy of what is said. A poem might have the same literal message as a prose piece, but it conveys another layer of meaning. If we set a poem to music, it adds yet another layer of meaning. A translation of the Bible, in my opinion, has to convey the layer of meaning which says, “This is the Word of the Lord.” It has to convey the divine authority of Scripture. The bible versions which sound like a scholarly translation of a classical text or like a novel you might pick up at an airport book stall don’t seem to me to convey the sense of the authority of Scripture. And that is why I remain an AV addict and am apt to hanker after the Book of Common Prayer. Roger.