

THE AUTHORISED VERSION OF THE BIBLE (1611)

Nothing else in the religious prose of the Renaissance is equal in literary beauty and importance to the Authorised version of the Bible. It was the work of 47 scholars, nominated by James I, it is rightly considered as "the first English classic in prose".

The authors of the Authorised version, though of diverse opinions and convictions, were highly gifted and learned individuals, who resolved their differences while writing this work.

The Hebraic temper and the achievements of the Hebraic genius give the Bible a unique place in literature. The themes of the Bible are the greatest that literature can treat. They are mainly three - God, man and the physical universe. The physical universe is considered subordinate, and even subject to man, within the measure of his capacity and needs, while man, in his turn, is subject to God. The visible creation is the revelation of the wisdom, power and skill of its creator. All human beings are brethren because all of them are the children of God. God is represented as desiring to draw man into closer and closer union with Himself, or as restoring man to his original condition of friendly trustful child.

Bible is a great literature. The Bible is classic in itself. It is permanently enjoyable and permanently helpful. There is no artificiality, no ambiguity, no obtrusive ornament in the presentation of the subject-matter. Great thoughts and matters are presented with sincerity, earnestness and warmth of sentiment in a simple and lucid style. So, the Bible has those qualities which make literature enduring. The authors of the Bible employed vigorous and forceful style, in which every sentence, nay, every word, contributes to the creation of the central effect.

First, it deals with the origin of the world and man, in which everyone is interested. Secondly, it emphasises the conception that all nations are of one blood, and that all men are brethren, since God is the father of all. Thirdly, the morality of the Bible is addressed to the well-beings of all human beings in the world. Fourthly, it deals with the future of mankind which is in the Bible as bound up with the general acceptance of Hebrew principles and ideals. Fifthly, it proclaims the glory of God. The Psalter, the most lyrical part of the Bible, is perhaps the widest in its appeal because it echoes the deep devout feelings of every believing soul in the world. It is a great classic that has

exerted and is exerting great influence on mankind and human thought. The translators of the Bible had to face many problems. The sentence structure was simple and there was no conception of poetry or paragraph. "And" was the chief connective and so, the periodic sentence was beyond their grasp. The universality of its interest, the concreteness and picturesqueness of its language, and the simplicity of its structure made their task easy. The translators were thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the Hebrew Bible and were capable of finding the most appropriate phrase or diction in their own language.

The English translation of the Bible needed a popular language which differed from the artificial or the Scholastic. Its vocabulary consisted of such words as ordinary people would naturally use to describe objects and to utter their emotions. It abounded in concrete expressions.

In The Authorised Version the typical character is reflected. Selden points out: "The Bible is rather translated into English words, than into English phrase. The Hebraisms are kept and the phrase of that language is kept." The translators of The Authorised Version studied the English renderings of The Bible and the principal versions into other languages,

and compared them with the original. They endeavoured hard to assimilate all the excellencies of these versions into one version known as The Authorised Version of the Bible. Previously, one Bible was read in the church and another at home, now, all parties and classes turned with one accord to the new version, and adopted it as their own. Its language, which is simple, clear, concrete and pictorial, melodious, rhythmical and lyrical, became immensely popular in all sections of the English Society, and moulded the development of English language and literature.

The Authorised version became a national possession and a classic in English literature. It appealed to the rich and to the poor alike. Milton says: "There are no songs to be compared with the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets." Hallam admits that its style is "the perfection of our English language." Rickett remarks about its influence: "The literary influence of the Bible is two fold. There is the rhetorical influence of the Old Testament, and the conversational influence of the New". The Bible has influenced literature in the following modes:

themselves", "dark sayings", "a soft answer",
"a word in season", "moth and rust" etc.

5. The language of the Bible, its style and lyrical quality also greatly influenced literature.

The Authorised Version of the Bible is the chief bond which holds united, in a common loyalty and a common endeavour, the various branches of the English race and the English literature.