

# 'The Wretched Woman of John Eight'

by Charles Alexander

---

*The sermon defends the canonicity of John 7:53-8:11 and the Received Text, and argues that the story of the Wretched Woman is a prophetic token of coming judgment upon a nation so wedded to its own self-righteousness.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23, Proverbs 30:5, Jeremiah 17:13, Matthew 26:6, Mark 14:8, Luke 7:36, John 8:7, 2 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 5:7

**Topics:** "Bible Preservation", "Canonical Authority"

---

## Description

Charles Alexander preaches about the importance of preserving the roots of faith and language by holding onto the Authorized Version of the Bible amidst the influx of newer translations. He emphasizes the need to resist subtle erosions of the Word of God and challenges believers to consider the implications of critical attacks on the Bible's authenticity. The sermon delves into the story of the woman taken in adultery in John 8, defending its canonicity and highlighting its deep significance and prophetic meaning. Alexander warns against the dangers of accepting new versions that may undermine the foundations of faith and lead to confusion and uncertainty.

---

## Transcript

### FOREWORD

"THE WRETCHED WOMAN OF JOHN EIGHT" was written by the Rev. C. D. Alexander some years ago when the then newly published New English Bible was in the ascendancy. Since then, the Christian World has been flooded with "newer" and "better" translations of the Bible - the latest being the New International Version.

The words written by Mr. Alexander then, are still very relevant today:

". . . The modern versions are introducing to the evangelical faith today the thin end of the wedge of criticism of the Word of God.... The Foundation of faith, just as much as the foundations of our language, depend on the preservation of its roots. The A.V. is essential to both and cannot be replaced."

In this booklet Mr. Alexander shows how the account of the woman taken in adultery, and of her forgiveness by the Saviour, is often relegated to a footnote or has a line drawn above and below it (as in the case of the New International Version), with the note, "The earliest and most reliable manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53 8:11" and is consigned to the "unreliable" camp and is

virtually regarded as being apocryphal. Rev. Alexander writes, "This forlorn woman has been found to be uncanonical and has been driven from her rightful place in Scripture by a shower of critical brickbats every bit as cruel as those which the Pharisees picked up from the rubbish heaps, to make an untimely end of her in the days Of the Son of Man." Strong words indeed, but words which challenge us to real prevent consideration of any subtle erosions of the Word of God.

In regard to the issuing of new versions of the Scriptures, J. C. Philpot one time editor of the Gospel Standard wrote quite prophetically in 1857: "Into whose hand would the revision fall? What an opportunity for the enemies of truth to give us a mutilated false Bible. Of course, they must the learned men, great critics, scholars, and divines. But these are notoriously either Puseyites or Neologians; in other words, deeply tainted with either popery or infidelity. Where are there learned men sound to the truth, not to say alive unto God, who possess the necessary qualifications for so important a work? And can erroneous men, men dead in trespasses and sins, carnal, worldly, ungodly persons, spiritually translate a book written by the blessed Spirit? We have not the slightest ground for hope that they would be godly men, such as was have reason to believe translated the Scriptures into our present version

"Again, it would unsettle the minds of thousands, as to which was the Word of God, the old translation or the new. What a door it would open for the workings of infidelity, or the temptations of Satan! There would be two Bibles spread through the land, the old and the new, and what confusion would this usage in almost every place!

"The present English Bible has been blessed to thousands of the saints of God; and not only so it has becomes part of our national inheritance which we have received unimpaired from our fathers, and are bound to hand down unimpaired to our children. It is, we believe the grand bulwark of Protestantism; safeguard of the gospel, and the treasure of the Church; and we should he traitors in every sense of the word if we consented to give it up to be rifled by sacrilegious hands.

---

Editor's note: Now follows the original issue by Mr. Alexander.

IN THE GOSPEL, according to Professor C. H. Dodd and his New English Bible collaborators, the Woman of John Eight the woman taken in sin is relegated from the text to an addendum at the end of the gospel. But not for her sins. This forlorn creature has been found to be uncanonical and has been driven from her rightful place by a shower of critical brickbats every bit as cruel as those which the Pharisees picked up from the rubbish heaps of Jerusalem to make an untimely end of her in the days of the Son of Man. Their subsequent shame and confusion when arrested at the last moment from their bloody deed, is however not likely to be repeated in our day, for we now have a presence of armchair critics who know no repentance.

It is always at the hands of men that this pathetic woman has suffered. She became, early in the Christian era, a source of great embarrassment to some of the Fathers who never understood how The Saviour could have ever said to such a woman, "Neither do I condemn thee". It was not the only particular in which some of them were wedded to the Law rather than to the Gospel. The Revised translators of 1881 slyly put the lady in a parenthesis as being a more appropriate garment for such a haggard offender against public morals, and following their lead, the compilers of the American Revised Standard Version made a footnote of her at the bottom of the page. Having get her as far as the back door, it was nothing for Professor Dodd and his team to push her through which is precisely what they have done. She is now a

mere addendum, and one more version shall see her off the premises altogether - but we fear she will not go alone.

What is astonishing to us is that no recent expositor (so far as we know) has publicly taken up the cause of this tragic and much misused soul. Indeed, we have heard it said in the very best of evangelical circles, by those who would fain be known as teachers every bit as respectable in their scholarship as those who have thrown the lady to the wolves, that this cavalier treatment of her is perfectly just, and that we must avoid at all costs incurring any further charges of evangelical obscurantism by pleading a hopeless cause.

## EVANGELICAL RELUCTANCE

The reluctance of evangelicals in responsible positions to take up the righteous cause at this distressed female is illustrated only too well in our own frustrations in our effort to obtain redress for her. The first part of this manuscript lay in the office of a well known evangelical weekly for over two years under promise of publication, and we were forced at length to demand its return while we tried another editorial office. The second editor was the editor of *The Christian*, who promised early publication, but after long patience we again sought its return and were mortified to discover it had been lost beyond hope. *The Christian* being now defunct we feel we are harming nobody by mentioning the fact.

Finally, we tried the offer of one of our leading "Reformed" publications, whose penciled notes on our quickly returned manuscript showed only too well how irritated those with a reputation for scholarship can become when it is a matter the defense of the Received Text and the Authorized Version.

At last, under pressure of recent events and at the urgent request of friends we are launching through our own meagre resources, our defense of this Wretched Women's righteous claim to canonicity, adding to it a defense of the Received Text of the New Testament, and of our grand and great Authorized Version.

The time is opportune. The Old Testament portion of Dr. Dodd's New English Bible goes on to the market at this juncture with great fanfare of publicity trumpets, by which a large sector of the evangelical public will be beguiled.

Our readers ought to know that the Received Text is the name given to that collation of ancient manuscripts which in unbroken succession (we believe) has come down to us from the time of the apostles, preserving for all time, in the providence of God, what was originally written by the apostles' own hands. As we believe in the verbal inerrancy, infallibility and absolute inspiration of that Word which God originally gave through the writers of Old Testament and New, so we believe equally that it was just as necessary for God to preserve inviolate what was originally committed to the Church. We could not believe in a God who would be so remiss as to overlook that necessity to preserve His word, thus leaving the world in darkness or uncertainty as to His truth until possibly the day of Professor Dodd, who does not believe that the most of it is the Word of God anyway.

The Received Text was jealously preserved in the custody of the Eastern (or Greek) Church for many centuries during which the Latin world, centered on Rome and the Papacy, used only the Vulgate, which was the grossly imperfect Latin version descending by many hands from the days of Jerome. The recovery of the Greek version following the fall of Constantinople in the 15th century coincided in the providence of God with the invention of printing, the rise of the new learning in Europe, and the appearance of the great Dutch scholar Erasmus who published the Greek New Testament which proved the basis of the Reformation. The discovery that the word "penance" in the Vulgate was "repentance" in

the Greek, denoting the new heart and mind of the Covenant of Grace sealed in the blood of Christ, was an earthshaking thing. It was the subject of Luther's first proposition in those 95 theses by which he set the world afire.

## THE TRAITORS OF 1881

The modern attack on this glorious Received Text really began with the Revised Version of 1881, the translators of which were bullied by the modernistic Professor Westcott into substituting for the Received Text three or four ancient manuscripts, including the recently discovered Sinaitic Codex (a codex is a manuscript in book form as distinct from a scroll). The others were the Codices (plural for Codex) known as the Alexandrian, the Vatican, and that known as "Ephraemi Rescriptus". We spare our readers the more scholastic and scientific terms by which these copies are known

Now it is true that the story of the Woman of John Eight is omitted from all four of these copies which reputedly belong to the 4th century of our era or thereabouts, and these, being the most ancient copies extant of the Greek New Testament were enthusiastically adopted by Westcott and other critics as being more reliable on account of their age. We shall see presently how naively mistaken these critics were.

The story in John 8 is found in full in Codex Bezae, dating from the 6th century (named after Calvin's successor Theodore Beza who bequeathed it to posterity after it had come providentially into his hands).

The fact that the Alexandrian Codex does not contain the story is of little consequence, for this very defective ms. omits the whole of John's gospel from chapter 6:50 to 8:53 anyway, while Codex Ephraemi leaves out the whole from chapter 7:3 to 8:34. There is not wanting scholarship of the first order to defend the Received Text at this stage. Dr J. H. A. Ebrard, one time professor of Theology in the University of Erlangen, Germany, declared, "The external testimonies against its genuineness are altogether insignificant". Dr Rudolf Stier, whose massive work, *The Words of the Lord Jesus* has never been surpassed as a work of deep piety and scholarship of the first order, reminds us that the question why this story was omitted in most of the known ancient mss. and versions was answered long ago by Augustine and Ambrose, who declared that it arose from a fear of misunderstanding or of abuse; or from an ascetic scruple concerning its morality, inducing men to ignore the very remarkable absolution of so gross a sinner.

Readers need hardly be reminded that the early centuries of the Church were notable for the increasing development of a double standard of morality. The Church was on the road to the monkish cell, and celibacy was being exalted into a virtue. Marriage was already being treated as something not quite clean, while adultery (in women at any rate) was a crime for which there was little hope of mercy. It was not surprising that men of this calibre were utterly unfitted to understand the Saviour's words, "Neither do I condemn thee". They would mutilate the Word of God rather than allow this dangerous clemency to get abroad.

## BUT HOW DID SHE GET IN?

Let us quote the fine words of the sainted Dr. Stier: "They who are not contented with this explanation place themselves under an obligation to answer a preliminary question of still more significance: whence and upon what ground did any ever presume to interpolate in the Gospel of John such an unauthorized and unattested narrative?" Klee says boldly, "It is, generally speaking, easy enough to account for its absence in many of the codices, if it had been originally in the text; but the converse is utterly

unaccountable, how it should ever have crept in if it had never been there."

In other words, the critics are under obligation to show how, in an age when the church was racing to asceticism and celibacy, and marriage itself was falling into contempt, the insertion of such a narrative could ever have been tolerated. It would be like foisting the Book of Jonah on the Rabbis, with all its concern for gentile repentance outside the Law, against the intolerable weight of Jewish prejudice. The fact that Jonah is there at all is a proof of the authenticity of the prophecy. And the fact that the Woman of John Eight is there at all, and at such a time in the Church's history, is one of the greatest proofs of her canonicity. She literally forces her way into the Sacred Page against all the pharisaism and prejudice of mistaken men.

Jerome, that mighty assessor of scriptural evidences, unhesitatingly admits this woman into the canon, despite his own prejudices against conjugalism. And Jerome lived at a time when he was in a position to know what ought to be included in Holy Scripture.

The case for the woman goes even further. In the eloquent words of Dr. Stier: "The narrative in itself was assuredly not such as could have been invented; it exhibits no trace of being apocryphal, betrays no marks whatever of fiction: on the contrary it is throughout, and especially in the stooping down and writing upon the ground, as original as it is in harmony with the spirit and mind of Jesus. If any man fails to discern that, we most confidently deny to him the capacity of estimating the value of internal criticism in matters that pertain to Scripture... We hold, and hold fast, with the utmost confidence, the assurance that this contested section is St. John's."

## THE FINAL PROOF

The concealed prophetic meaning in the story of the Wretched Woman of John Eight is the final proof of the authenticity of the account. None but an apostle could have written that account, and that apostle, the apostle John. The allegation that the story was invented long after the apostles by a fraudulent anonymity with an axe to grind would be an intolerable absurdity if it were not so wicked an invention.

Like all the incidents recorded by John it has a deep and prophetic significance which might well elude all the combined powers of Bible scholars to discover, did not the Lord of Glory Himself, who holds in His right hand the seven stars of rule and authority in the Church, see fit to have laid it on the minds and hearts of earnest students of the Word in the course of the centuries.

Luther, with unerring instinct, perceived in the narrative a clear exposition of the Law and the Gospel. The representatives of Moses were there to carry out the injunction of that Divine Code which requires the death of the sinner for unrequited sin. He who came, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved, gave the Pharisees that peerless answer, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone". For under the Mosaic Law, all are condemned and guilty.

## WHO WAS SHE?

None remained to condemn the trembling female, and He who knew all hearts and had power on earth to forgive sin, pronounced her release: "Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more". Was she Mary Magdalene? Was it she who washed His feet subsequently with her tears? Was Mary Magdalene also Mary of Bethany (as an unbroken historic belief asserts) for never do we find these two peerless women mentioned together in the same place even when it was inevitable they should have been together, had

they not been one and the same person? And have we not got it all wrong, when we build up the character of Mary of Bethany into that of some sweet delicate creature who never went astray, when John at least tells us it was she who let down her silken tresses in the presence of the men, and anointed His feet? Was the household of Bethany the idyllic sanctuary of a happy family, or was it not the home of that Simon who loved little because he had not had much forgiven?

(Compare Luke 7:36-50, Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:8; and John 11:7).

But we digress, though the discussion is fascinating.

One outstanding feature of the story which clinches its divine nature and its canonicity is the mysterious stooping down of the Saviour to write upon the ground. The elucidation of this act which most of our commentators pass by without throwing any light upon it, yields a result which stamps the whole with the hallmark of divinity and waves aside as puerile the portentous objections of the manuscript critics.

#### WHY HE WROTE ON THE GROUND

Why did Christ stoop down and write in the dust? It was a prophetic token of coming judgment upon a nation so wedded to its own self righteousness that it could not recognize the Redeemer when He came, but was about to reject and crucify Him. Their infatuation with the Law as the instrument of their own justification, led them to bring that haggard offender, that poor Magdalene, before the Saviour for sentence whereas it was themselves who were being sentenced and upon whom as a nation destruction, pitiless and irremediable, was about to descend from heaven. It was in accord with Jeremiah 17, verse 13, that Christ wrote on the earth:

"O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be, WRITTEN IN THE EARTH, because they have forsaken the Lord, tire fountain of living waters."

If the story had been invented, the forger would have been under pain of making plain to his readers why Christ should write in the earth. That we are left to discover that for ourselves, is demonstration that here we have the mind of the Spirit who bids us search if we would understand.

#### INTERPOLATIONS

But our defense of the canonicity of the story of this woman raises the entire question of "interpolations" in the Divine Word, and the reliability of the Bible we have in our hands. It is almost universally assumed that one of the greatest examples of these "intrusions" into the sacred text is 1 John 5:7 -

"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost and these three are one."

We like what Dr. John Owen said when speaking of those who would not admit the canonicity of the epistle to the Hebrews. He laid down a principle which they should heed who accept the allegation that there are interpolations in the Received Text upon which the evangelical Church has relied for so long. "It may be easily imagined," he wrote, "once such exceptions are admitted, how able some men will think themselves, to question other passages in the New Testament and thereby render the authority dubious." Which is precisely what is happening.

Our readers ought not to accept for one moment that any single alleged interpolation in the Received Text has been proved to be so in fact. We now proceed to show the ground of our confidence and also to advance a DEFENCE OF THE AUTHORISED VERSION.

What we have written above represents what we wrote in 1961, the year the New English Bible was launched upon the market. It is now 1970, and at the time of writing we are on the eve of the publication of the Old Testament section of that Bible, and consider this hour both propitious and ominous, for the issue of this paper.

## THE PLOT EXPOSED

Dr Stier did not know that at the very time he wrote in the middle of last century, scholars were already at work in Britain and America whose researches were to confirm in a startling way, the authenticity of the Received Text upon which the Authorized Version of 1611 is based, and to expose the defectibility of the very manuscripts on which the Revised Translators of 1881 and their partners in the USA (who produced the American Standard Version) relied. These defective versions are those upon which all revisions have been based ever since, including the American R. S.V. (now being insidiously or even openly and aggressively foisted upon the evangelical world), the N.E.B. and the numerous brood of versions which are springing from the printing presses with such rapidity that it is now almost impossible to keep pace with them.

Dr. R. L. Dabney, U.S.A., scholar, pastor, philosopher, teacher, a man of acute logical and analytical mind, laboured to show that the Received Text was the true authentic text which lay nearest to the actual original writings of the apostles. He showed moreover, that the three ancient manuscripts known as the Sinaitic, Vatican, and Alexandrian, upon which largely the modern revisions are based, are defective and contradictory to each other and their principal variations from the Received Text are undoubtedly due to their connection with the Arian heresy which raged some time before the alleged date at which these mss. were written. The Arian heresy of course, was that early form of what is now known as Unitarianism, which questioned the absolute deity of Christ as the Second Person of the Glorious Trinity,

Accepting for argument that the Received Text is represented only in mss. dating from a time considerably later than the alleged age of the three mss. mentioned previously, Dr. Dabney showed conclusively that the dictum, "The earlier the mss. the more accurate", was completely fallacious. The probable reason why those earlier mss. survived was because they were not in regular use, and they were put on one side while the liturgical copies, those in constant use in the churches for the daily lectionary readings, were worn out and discarded to make way for fresh copies. It can never be proved that the copyists were other than careful and reverent men, who handed on the authorized text unimpaired in generation after generation.

On the other hand there is every reason to suspect that the heretical copies survived because they WERE heretical, and the orthodox would not use them.

## REVISIONS BASED ON BAD COPIES

The fallacy of the dictum, "the older the better", by which the Revision of 1881 and its American counterpart were betrayed, is devastatingly exposed by Dr. Dabney. The three ancient mss. upon which the revisers relied (and bequeathed their error to all the revisionists who have followed them, down to the latest American R.S.V. or the British N.E.B.) disagree more between themselves than they disagree with

the Received Text!

This is what Dabney says on this point:

"If the maxim were true that the most ancient codices are the most trustworthy, then the most ancient ought to differ least between themselves...The instances in which the Sinaitic, Vatican, and Alexandrine mss. agree among themselves are comparatively rare. The disagreements of the three among themselves are not fewer than five thousand: and this excludes the minuter variations of spelling and arrangement which disappear in translation... Thus it appears that the plan of our critics, when executed by their own hands, seems to yield very poor results. The three codices mentioned harmonize less with each other than the digests made from the diversified testimony of the despised!"

#### 1 JOHN 5:7 VINDICATED

In a masterly survey of the entire field, Dabney vindicates the text 1 John 5:7 as being part of the original text which the apostle John wrote, along with John 8, and the other portions which have been omitted, rejected or otherwise impugned by the R.V., the A.R.V., the R.S.V., the N.E.B. and others too numerous to mention. Evangelicals with an almost divine reverence for the name of Dr. Scofield of Reference Bible fame, should know that their idol has perpetuated the errors of the rationalists and the unitarians in his marginal note of 1 John 5:7. As though Dr. Dabney, his fellow countryman, never existed, and in apparent ignorance of the work of other great evangelical scholars of last century, Dr. Scofield says: "It is generally agreed that verse 7 has no real authority and has been inserted." It is not Dr. Scofield's only offence in this field for he seems to have slavishly followed the evil example set by the Revisers in several other important places.

The position of these revisions gets worse and worse as one inquires further into them.

Dr. Dabney points out some matters of the very gravest concern which ought to suspend a question mark over practically all the numerous versions which have appeared with chronic frequency during this century.

#### CHRIST'S DEITY THE TARGET

He shows that the only real doctrinal variations proposed by the three codices as against the Received Text, ATTACK THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY AND IN PARTICULAR THE ONE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S DEITY.

We quote again from Dr. Dabney:

"The various readings taken from the various mss. and versions are counted by the hundred thousands; but the vast majority of them are utterly insignificant; and among the few which remain (after deducting these) all which bear on doctrine bear one doctrine; and that, a doctrine which was keenly debated just before the times when, it is claimed, these three old codices were copied. Their admirers claim for them an origin in the, fourth or fifth century. The Sabellian and Arian controversies raged in the third and fourth. Is there no coincidence here? Things do not happen again and again regularly without a cause. Why is it that some, other doctrines of Christianity do not happen to be assailed by these variations? The curious coincidence almost irresistibly impels the mind to the conclusion, that not the chance errors of transcribers but some deliberate hand, has been at work. When we remember the date of the great Trinitarian contest, and compare it with the supposed date of these exemplars of the sacred text, THE GROUND OF

## SUSPICION BECOMES VIOLENT...."

Our friends will find the whole of Dr. Dabney's article in the Banner of Truth edition of Dabney's "Discussions: Evangelical and Theological" Vol. 1, article "Doctrinal Various Readings of the N.T. Greek", page 350.

Much work has been done both in Dabney's day and subsequently by godly and scholarly men to establish the authenticity of the Received Text on which the Authorized Version is based.

A valuable summary of the whole discussion is also available in the pamphlet, The Providential Preservation of the Greek Text of the N.T., by "Ergatees" (the nom de plume of a Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland minister in New Zealand).

Other valuable articles, pamphlets, etc., including Rome and the R. S. V., by the converted R.C. monk, Dr. Hugh Farrell, of California, may be obtained from the Trinitarian Bible Society, 217 Kingston Road, London, SW19 3NN.

## A.V. IN PERIL AMONG EVANGELICALS

We append further observations of our own in reference to the preservation and use of the Authorized Version and the danger to evangelicalism presented by the insidious campaign to discredit this version, and to depose it completely in favour of the American R.S.V., which as we have shown, is a defective version, dangerous to the faith.

We are living in days of total assault on the foundations of faith and morals. Not the least of Satan's devices is to shake a believer's faith in the Bible which he has in his hands. Is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? No, it is not, say our evangelical critics. The modernists and rationalists are right (they say) in so far as they have critically examined the text of Holy Scripture and shown to us that in many instances we have not got the original text, or, having that text, the accepted translations of our fathers are defective or erroneous. Vital words are to be omitted, added, or altered. What we need (they further say) is aversion to end all versions and let it be the American R.S.V.

Further, our evangelical critics (taking sides with the enemies of the Lord) object to the language of the Authorized Version as archaic, obsolete, a stumbling block to the young and a discouragement to reading.

When pressed upon the matter these critics appear to imply that a new version in up to date English, dropping the "thee" and "thou" and attractively produced, will win many more readers for The Bible and create a healthy interest in the Word of God

We have lived with the new versions long enough however to find that this is as great a fallacy as any other of the false assertions regarding these versions.

Ever since the 20th century came in we have had version after version in modern English. Dr. Moffat was all the rage for a time. Phillips was an absolute winner of course till the next author came along with a more up-to-the minute score. There is not the slightest evidence (apart from boosted sales, clever publicity, commercial ingenuity, pushing these productions on to the gullible public) that anymore people are reading the Bible or reading it more intelligently, reverently, profitably, than before. On the contrary, judging from the state of knowledge in the average reader, inside or outside the church, we are still descending and that with increasing speed, to lower depths of Bible ignorance and neglect.

The Roman Catholic Church has joined in the enthusiasm. We have the so called Jerusalem Bible, with its Hail Marys and its R.C. dogma and error, carefully sugared for the delectation of the non Romanist to show him how acceptable is the Roman Church as the favourite in the stakes now being run in the great ecumenical race.

#### DR. BRUCE JOINS IN

Before we have got used to living with the one, we have the very next, which is going to transform Bible knowledge. They are, now trying to sell to us "THE LIVING NEW TESTAMENT" garnished with a special commendation from Dr. F. F. Bruce, who writes, "Those for whom Bible language is almost a foreign tongue will find this version brings the essential message of the New Testament home to them in terms whose meaning they can understand". We seem to have heard it all before.

One thing upon which the propounders of the new versions seem to be unanimous is that the Authorized Version, the foundation of the piety of three and a half centuries in the English speaking world, is discredited and "out". But let us see.

#### THE PEERLESS VERSION OF 1611

The England language was at its full strength when the Authorized Version was produced in 1611. It was the age of Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe and the other great English classicists who moulded the English language and made it the greatest instrument the world had ever seen for carrying the message of the divine Word to hearth and home. The two great currents from which modern English is largely composed, Anglo Saxon and Norman French, had at last coalesced after centuries of struggle. The invention of printing in the late 15th century just in time to conserve and spread the doctrines of the Reformation - standardised the English language. Shakespeare exploited its immense possibilities with a power unexampled, that is, but for one all-important exception, the Authorized Version of 1611. Mr. Kipling thought he saw traces of Shakespeare's influence in our great English version. He was almost certainly mistaken, but it was a pardonable error, for the majesty and grandeur of chapters 40-66 of Isaiah, to which he pointed, are comparable to anything that the great Shakespeare himself ever produced.

We ask our readers to open their Bibles almost anywhere in those chapters and find anything in the language which is other than the greatest English, and fully intelligible to any reader of today.

#### THE DECLINE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

We are living in days when English is no longer what it was, and very quickly it will cease to be what it is. The 20th century is the age of the decay and disintegration of English. A glance at any of the new versions should convince of that. Bastard English in the novels which are read, in the base lyrics which are sung, in the slang and impurity on radio and television, in the steep decline of journalism in the daily newspapers, in the almost unintelligible speech heard on the streets of our great cities these are signs of the early death of English. The one hope of the language is to maintain its roots with the literature which made it what it was in its strength. We warn our readers of what is coming and coming fast. The infatuated conspiracy to banish the A.V. in favour of the R.S.V. is only a symptom. The R.S V itself will not last, for it has not the substance in itself which can survive New revisions are due. As new words appear and old are discarded (happening at a greater rate in ten years than formerly in three centuries) the versions of today will be part of the lumber of tomorrow. Our friends will only complicate their problems, not solve them, by this fatal enthusiasm.

## CHECK ON TRUTH REMOVED

There is another reason why we should cling to the A. V. For many generations, our people have been familiarised with its language, and man has been judged by his accuracy in quoting its verses. Hearers knew at once whether what was quoted was Bible or not. With the multiplying of versions there will soon be complete confusion. No longer will congregations have a ready check on the orthodoxy or otherwise of a preacher. He might be quoting from any one of half a hundred versions, with an air of authority and finality which imposes on the ignorant and the unwary. We shall be dependent for the truth of the Word, on "scholars", most of whom do not believe in the inspiration of the Word, who are unitarian and rationalistic in their beliefs. "Jesus we know and Paul we know, but who are ye?" might well be scribbled over their translations.

The authorised translators, we know. There were 47 of them. They were to a man, godly and pious believers, scholars of the first order, carefully selected as a parliament of translators the like of whom the world has seldom seen - and certainly will never see again - whose faith was equal to their task of understanding the Word they translated.

We say without fear of contradiction, IT IS NOW IMPOSSIBLE TO ASSEMBLE SUCH A COMPANY OF MEN FOR SUCH A TASK, AND THERE IS NO PROSPECT THAT WE EVER SHALL.

The men of 1881 were certainly not such men, as the records of their assembly clearly show. They were not to be trusted with so holy a task. They were stampeded by Wescott and Hort into accepting three defective and heretical codices in place of the Received Text, and they set a fashion which has been only too eagerly followed by all who have come after them.

## THE ART OF TRANSLATION

It cannot be too clearly stated that the art of translation lies as much in the ability to penetrate the mind and intention of the original writer, as in any professional knowledge of the languages. In translation of the Holy Scriptures this has a significance heightened a thousand times. The wisdom of God is hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes - that is the humble in heart and the reverent and believing in spirit. It is impossible for any scholar, however great, to translate the Holy Scriptures in the spirit of the same, unless he believes those Scriptures to be the divine, infallible, totally inspired and preserved, Word of God. The evangelical ought to refuse with indignation any suggestion that unbelievers should spread the table for him, and prescribe what his diet should be. He knows better than the scholar, if the scholar be not like himself, a humble, reverent believer, searching and seeking to be admitted into the inner sanctuary of God.

## "THEE AND THOU"

It is a complete fallacy for the opponents of the A. V. to allege that the "Elizabethan" use of the pronouns in the second person singular is a handicap to understanding and a deterrent to reading the Word of God. It is usually town dwellers who say this. Over a very large portion of England, "thee" and "thou" are still in everyday use and likely to continue, despite the efforts of modern "education" to crush it. There are distinct advantages in the preservation of the style. Modern English has no means of distinguishing between singular and plural in the second person ("the person spoken to"). It is a distinct advantage in the reading of many parts of the Authorised Version, to have this distinction made and to know at a glance whether the text is speaking to one or more than one.

The new fashion of addressing God as "You" and "Your" we regard with deep regret and foreboding There is an expressive piety and reverence in the old forms, completely lost to modern speech, and we can only regard as a subtle and dangerous attack by the powers of darkness, the specious plea that it is all the same what words we use so long as our intentions are right. That is a plausibility which will not stand the test of examination, and would not be accepted in any field of human communication except the religious. It is another attempt to undermine the foundations of thought and true reverence. It is a curious reflection on the sincerity of much that is said in opposition to the use of old English for the second person singular, that the O.T. section of the N.E.B. reverts to "thee" and "thy" and "thou" in its translations of the Psalms!

It is suggested that it is an unfair burden on the minds of children, to require them to adapt themselves to these archaic forms.

All we can answer to that is, that those who say such things are as far from the minds of children as they well can be. No one learns so fast and readily as a child. No one is so adaptable as a child. In these days when children are expected to learn at least one foreign language, it is not regarded as an intolerable and unnatural burden that they should learn another grammar and another vocabulary than their own. Why should it be thought a thing intolerable that they should early be acquainted with English at its best, and learn to think in those syllables which are God's great gift to our people in the service of piety and understanding?

In French they will discover there is an equivalent to the English 'thee' and 'thou' in the tender, sweet and reverent address which the French use on the highest and most intimate occasions.

In heaven's name, what is there but positive and lasting good to be obtained in such a day of the degrading of our mother tongue, that children should early be acquainted with English at its best, tenderest, most feeling, eloquent and profound?

To summarise:

The modern versions, without exception, are introducing to the evangelical faith the thin end of the wedge of criticism of the Word of God the old lies that the Bible has been tampered with, that we do not have what was originally written, that things are not what they seem, that the divinity of Christ and the doctrine of One God in Three Persons are not so sure and certain as once we thought. The new versions assure us that whole sections of the Bible, like the first part the Eighth of John, have no business to be there that; 1 John 5:7 was put in by the Trinitarians; that the villains of the piece are not those who from the beginning have sought to destroy the Christian faith, but those who believe it; that many of the texts upon which we have relied for proof of the divinity of Christ are wrongly translated, or should not be there at all that God has deprived His Church for 2,000 years of a reliable version of His Word and has been pleased to impose upon His evangelical people a defective Bible and a misleading translation.

The foundations of faith, just as much as the foundations of our language, depend on the preservation of its roots. The A.V. is essential to both and cannot be replaced.

IN BRIEF

We must have confidence in any version available for general use. This may not be left by ordinary Christians to the expert and the scholar of today. We need a version which has been proved by time.

We must have a familiar version in common, everyday use. No one can safely recommend any except the Authorised Version. All the modern versions have tampered with the authentic text.

A variety of versions, produced by anybody and everybody, leads to confusion and uncertainty.

We must have confidence in those who have translated the Word of God. No one can say that any of the modern versions, on whose translation panels men have sat who are unfaithful to the historic Christian faith, inspire that confidence.

It is a subtle blow against the whole idea of the Divine, to allege that only at the end of the days has the Word of God been really recovered and even now, only defectively.

The disagreement among all the modern versions raises suspicion of their reliability!

It is a false assumption that the new versions, or one version more, will induce people to read and reverence the Bible. There is not the slightest sign that people are more interested in the Word of God now than they were ten years ago despite the multiplying of new versions during that time.

There is no evidence of any demand for a new version, other than that created by suggestion, and artificial stimulation through clever publicity.

But there is every sign that evangelical people, especially students for the ministry, are getting more and more confused and vague, and paying less and less regard to the true means of understanding the Word of God, which are prayer, conviction, desire, and hard work.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/charles-alexander/the-wretched-woman-of-john-eight/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**