

Preface

SSRA addresses what is surely a central issue in the Sunday worship of all denominations: how much of the lectionary readings is understood by most of the congregations. The gospel readings will be largely familiar and intelligible, and many Old Testament narratives require little beyond the contextualization that some supply and others would find helpful. But the impact of lections from the Old Testament prophets is sometimes limited to their impressive rhetoric at the expense of their religious substance, and the New Testament epistles tend to be heard more for their moral exhortation than their religious message and theological depth.

This new resource aims to reduce the loss, not only by a format on the page which will help readers at church services to deliver the message more clearly, but also by the clarity of a new translation. The short lines on the page will encourage readers to slow down (and speak up, where no electronic help is provided) and hearers to absorb what is being read. The language of the new translation is dignified and recognizably within the familiar linguistic tradition of translations for use in liturgy. An element of paraphrase and rearrangement can clarify without changing the meanings. The editor's consulting different translations and commentaries, and his study of the original texts, ensures that this version is sufficiently accurate, and that nothing of substance is lost. I would want to use it myself and so am happy to recommend its wider use in church, but also at home in preparation for worship. Here too, different English versions of a text enable us to identify ambiguities, and can encourage us to hold different meanings in mind, enriching our reception of a text. In a generation where biblical literacy is in decline, this contribution towards rebuilding deserves to be used. Its producer would agree where the proof of the pudding is to be found, and would echo Isaiah 55: 'Come, all who are thirsty, come to the water ... listen now to the word of the Lord that you may live, says the Lord. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call on him while he is near. So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth. It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it. And you shall go out with joy...'

Robert Morgan
Linacre College Oxford
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