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Ward's "Authorized: The Use & Misuse of the King James" (book review)

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Book Reviews



Ward, Mark. (2018). *Authorized: The Use & Misuse of the King James Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press. 168 pp. \$12.99. ISBN 9781683590552

Mark Ward, an Academic Editor for Lexham Press, offers in this work a brief examination of issues related to the translation and approachability of the King James Version Bible (KJV). Ward draws on his own respect for and personal interaction with the KJV to address an assortment of contemporary criticism, including the text's readability.

The author clearly states his purpose to evaluate how twenty-first-century English speakers interact with the KJV and consider its place within the contemporary church. In doing so, Ward takes care to value the KJV's role in tradition while addressing the limitations of its seventeenth-century vocabulary. Notably, Ward claims no desire to debate King James Version Only (KJVO) proponents. Consequently, he handles the material with restraint and respect, concentrating on tangible factors of evaluation such as word usage, syntax, punctuation, and language variants. Of meaningful note within Ward's work is a practical examination of reading-level analytics in chapter four. Addressing a common rebuttal by KJVO supporters, which advocates a fifth-grade reading level, he dissects and clarifies the processes used to substantiate such a claim. Ward delves into computer-generated models and shows the problems of using these methods as reference points in determining reading levels for various English versions. In addition to a detailed analysis of the language used in the KJV, the author explores the original translators' intent to provide the Bible in common vernacular. The issue of accessibility to the Bible in a comprehensive language is ultimately what determines Ward's view on this topic. He concludes the KJV is no longer suited to modern readers and proposes the Bible should be in vernacular English; therefore, the KJV is not conducive for use in public ministry, evangelism, and discipleship (137). In taking this position, Ward does not however, advocate for the disposal of the KJV. Rather he sees it as a source for personal use and a continued valuable addition for the edification of Christians.

Ward using an easy writing style and humorous illustrations fulfills his purpose in providing an informed look at a sensitive issue within the church. His engaging personal commentary and meaningful examples allow the reader to follow his train

of thought. While this work is accessible and not especially scholarly, Ward does provide adequate chapter-divided notes at the end of the work for further research. Within the realm of KJV apologetics, this work is a practical resource which serves well as a respectful overview to the at times polarizing topic. *Authorized* makes a relevant addition to a theological or church library.

Reviewer

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