

Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654)

From preface to *The Art of Physick* (London, 1652)

PREFACE

[...] Now our Clergy (as they are pleased to stile themselves) although they durst not deny it (the Bible) us in our Mother Tongue, for then there was little reason why they should separate from the *Papists*, yet they have given us such a Translation as may well call aloud for amendment, in some places I suppose done ignorantly, In others I am afraid wilfully, the effects of which are dangerous, and call for Remedy, take a few in lieu of all.

1. They have added certain thousands of words, both in old and new Testaments. thereby corrupting in many places the sence of the Holy Ghost, in all places converting it like a *Nose of Wax* to their own present Judgements, and if you ask them why they did so, they will tell you it was to make sence of it; Blasphemous Wretches, did the Spirit of God when it penned the Scripture pen non-sense? And thus their going about to make better sense of it than the Spirit of God, in their apprehensions either would or could; by adding Verbs have in some places made absolute contradictions, in others delivered absolute errors, I shall give you an example of each, *Proverbs* 16.1: "The Preparations of the Heart [are] in man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord," so your vulgar translation reades it (for I hear say 'tis mended of late and am glad of it) whereas the word 'are' is added the original being, "The Preparation of mans heart, and the answer of the tongue is from the Lord," ascribing all to God, and nothing at all to man, as that self-advancing Principle of Free-will doth. If they had well studied the *Jerusalemy Talmud*, or *Buxtorfius*. his *Clavis Masorethicus*, they might have given it a version into the English dialect, without Additions.

2. Many words they have not translated at all, yea very many, I shall give you some, *Psalms* 56; "To the chief Musitian upon JONATH, ELIM, RECHOCHIM," why could they not have translated that "the dum Dove in a far Country", together with many other in the beginning of the *Psalms*, which why they should not translate, I can not imagine unless it were to hide from people what the scope and the drift of -the Psalm was:...

3. They translate one and the same word diverse waies, and when they have done so they play the antics with it most notably; an example for this would not do amiss. The word *Presbiter* is usually in the new Testament translated *Elder*, nay alwaies, two or three places excepted; and the word *Bishop* sometimes translated *Overseer*: the word *Bishop* is but a title of honor at most in our Dialect, and the word *Presbiter* is scarce English, but is the very same with an Elder; and see what juggling our Clergie makes with the words, we must have no *Bishops*, but *Presbiters*, *Elders* and *Overseers*, (such as the vulgar call *Heaven-drivers*) when the Scripture makes no difference at all between *Bishops*, *Presbiters*, *Elders* and *Overseers*, Acts 20.17 "Paul sent to Ephesus and called the *Elders* of the Curch Church;" The *Presbiters* saith the original, and verse 28, he bids them take heed to themselves and to

FROM PREFACE TO *THE ART OF PHYSICK*

the Flock over which the Lord had made them *Overseers*, over which the Lord has made them *Bishops* saith the Original; consider this, and pray tell me what Scripture difference you can find between a *Bishop*, a *Presbiter*, an *Overseer* and an *Elder*; And indeed I wonder the *Presbiters* should make ' themselves different from *Bishops*, when neither God nor Nature doth; not God by the foregoing Scripture, not Nature, for they are as like them in condition as a Pomewater is like an apple.

I now leave the Book of the Scripture [...] and come to another Art which is of an inferior Nature, which is *Physick*, and is the Basis of this Book, with which I will conclude: Truly you are much bound to return thanks over the left shoulder to the Colledg of Physitians for hiding the Mystery (as they call it) of Physick from you, to reveal which, I have already made some Progress, and shall (God willing) persist, till I cease to be amongst the Living. Our grave, wise and learned Colledg of Physitians as Their Pupils and Flatterers are pleased to call them, they must have also the Rules of Physick hid from you, lest as they and the Papists say, you should do yourselves a mischief by them, when indeed the truth is their own gain, and credit lies at stake, people would not adore them, and employ them, and spend their whol estates upon them, as now (poor hearts) they are too often forced to do; I shall now in the conclusion of my Epistle, first give you my reasons, why the Rules of Physick ought to be in every Nation in their own mother Tongue, for every one to reade, and secondly, what part thereof you may find in this short Treatise of mine.

My Reasons are these,

1. The Works of God are common for every one to view, and for every one to receive benefit by, and it is a sin in man to impropriate what God hath left common. If God have left the Medicine common, who gave man commission to impropriate or hide the Vertues, let them shew that, and I am satisfied.

2. The Elements though disagreeing amongst themselves are maintained by Unity, Concord. and Harmony, & what Harmony can there be in Humane Society when the Vertues of Medicines, or the Art of Physick is concealed, let any Musitian judg whether concealment or communication further Harmony?

3. Want of communication hath bred this discord in Physitians themselves that is, for want of speculation makes them slaves to Tradition, and Tradition is the Father of Errors; Pride sets every one a-searching after Arguments to maintain his Opinion, and those Arguments are drawn neither from Reason nor Experience, but old Rusty Authors, or at best such as lived in different Climates; whereas if the Knowledg of Physick were communicated openly, as it was wont to be of old when Physitians were honest, Physitians themselves would be able to give a Reason, *proprio morte*, of what they do, and verify it by experience when they have done.

4. Hiding the grounds of Physick from the vulgar is the reason they take so much preposterous Physick as they do, and the cause of the Diseases and Infirmities they bring

upon themselves and others that way, for had they the true Rules of Physick they would never practice false ones.

5. Hiding the Grounds of Physick murders all such poor wretches as die either through want of an able Physitian neer, or through want of Knowledg of such Medicines as grow neer them, or for want of Knowledg of the true method of Physick, that thereby they may know what their Disease is, the blood of many thousands, nay many hundreds of thousands of which cries for vengeance at the Hands of the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, and that our Colledg as proud as they are shall another day know to their cost.

Lastly, It makes us such Slaves as cannot be paralel'd in any Age, for all Ancient Physitians wrote in their own mother Tongue, nay all the Grecian Physitians brought their Cures once a year into the Temple of *Aesculapius*, & there registred them to publick view, that every one might see what they had done, and how they did it, whereby they knew not only how to cure themselves when their Disease was light, but where to find an able Physitian when the Disease was difficult, and we poor Slaves, are so churlishly handled by a pitiful Colledg that we may say as the Philosopher said, all we know is that we know nothing, or that the Colledg by their good wills would suffer us to know nothing.

I come now to the Work in hand which I present to the world as a Primmer to learn Physick by, and desire him that desires to study Physick to begin at it, for it contains the first Rudiments of the Art; It is the last thing that ever *Galen* wrote, and contains the Epitome of all the rest of his large Writings, and I hope shall lose nothing by my Comment on it, what I have added was only to bring his Theery into a part of Practick; by studying it, as little as it is thou maist come to learn a great part of thy self, be studious in it; pray for me, and farewell.