

Great Uncle Cecil, R.I.P.

A recent significant birthday (you're how old?) brought the magnificent, newly published two-volume Oxford Companion to the Book. This is a veritable cornucopia for bibliophiles. I was delighted to discover in its pages a reference to my publishing grandfather John Gray in an article, coupled with his brother Cecil.

Except that he had no brother. Shock, horror! This authoritative book on The Book is not error-free. It is corrupt.

Reminds me that this is sometimes how we treat the Bible. Unless we understand the human element in the transmission of God's word to us, we may treat it as a magical tome. The intention of the editors of the Oxford Companion is surely be to try to be as accurate as possible and thankfully I will have the opportunity to tell them that great uncle Cecil Gray should be expunged from the pure Oxford text.

Similarly, Bible translators are on a quest to make God's word true to the intention of the original authors. It is an on-going, prayerful journey of scholarly discovery and is not fixed in stone or type. Otherwise 'Cecil' may take on a life of his own and the text will become truer than the reality.

Nicholas