

The Word of God



Among All Nations

QUARTERLY RECORD

THE MAGAZINE OF THE TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY



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October to December 2004



Trinitarian Bible Society

Founded in 1831 for the circulation of Protestant or uncorrupted versions of the Word of God

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NEW DIARY & CALENDARS 2005

OUR DIARY AND CALENDARS FOR 2005 HAVE NOW ARRIVED.
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Trinitarian Bible Society
The Word of God Among All Nations



From the Desk of the General Secretary

We are often told that this is the age of 'Communication'. And yet, how poor most of us are at this! How prone we are to exaggerate, distort and embellish many of the messages or impressions our minds or ears receive during an average day! If we hear a sermon mentioning truth or honesty or condemning gossip, we may then feel grieved or convicted, because the Spirit of Truth that indwells us tells us that God hates—and even considers abominable—these things: 'a lying tongue', 'an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations', 'a false witness *that speaketh lies*' (Proverbs 6.16–19), 'a false balance' (ch. 11.1) and 'lying lips' (ch. 12.22). How we know we ought to echo the words of the Psalmist, 'I hate and abhor lying: *but thy law do I love*' (Psalm 119.163)!

Even to care outwardly about such things, and to voice those concerns, is considered quaint and old-fashioned by the world today,

let alone to cherish truth in the inner man and to 'think on' 'whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report' (Philippians 4.8).

Some politicians can hardly utter a sentence, it seems, without lying or twisting the truth for their own ends. Advertising—which seems to dominate the lives and set the 'fashion' for so many—is full of deviousness and distortion spawned of envy and covetousness. Even scientists seem bent upon convincing us that there is no 'absolute truth' any more; everything is 'relative'. Virtually all the 'fifteen-minute celebrities' and so-called 'role models' that fill our newspapers and airwaves, are openly and unrepentantly dishonest in one or more areas of their lives. Closer to home, within the average family, integrity is despised because it doesn't pay the bills or conform to society's demands.

Drawing all these strands together, what impact do they all have upon our regard for the Word of God? What the Lord has to say upon a particular matter, and especially how He fits it into the great theme of the plan of redemption, ought to be of paramount importance to us. Let us put this to the test.

Imagine, if you will, that you are very keen to discover what a man thought about a certain issue. Let us suppose that person is unknown to you, even long dead, and that he was of foreign nationality, but it is important, nevertheless, for a particular reason, that you find out his views. As many would do these days, you turn to the internet, key in the man's name, and several minutes later are delighted to discover that the man wrote a book all about the subject that presently concerns you. Although originally written several hundred years ago, this book, you find, has been translated into English, and it is still in print. After various telephone enquiries, you locate a copy of the book, priced remarkably cheaply, and are able to procure it by mail order within a few days. There before you on the page, in your own tongue, is a clear exposition of the teaching of the man, as declared to a contemporary, faithfully recorded at the time, and translated into English much later. You notice from the preface that the translator expresses himself to have the greatest respect for the teacher and his views, so that he laboured with the utmost diligence to produce an accurate rendition of the first hand copy available to him.

Days later, you bump into a friend of yours who shares your interest in the subject and in the writings and opinions of the man whose book you now possess. Excitedly you explain what you have found, but he laughs at you in a rather condescending way, as he triumphantly asserts that all this is 'old hat'. The teacher has been re-evaluated in the light of some modern discoveries and there is, in fact, a brand new English translation of his work in much racier prose. 'You need to get one of those', he says, 'in fact, once I have finished

mine, you can borrow it! Better still, it is now available on DVD, narrated by a well-known actor, with various "out-takes" as extras—you can see the things our man is reckoned to have thought, but changed his mind about for some reason and then cut them out of the finished work! I think I'll get one of those, it's bound to have various other little refinements and a nice case, then you can keep my edition; after all it has been out three months now!

What would you do in this situation? Does your friend's recommendation carry any weight? Are you impressed by the latest gadgets, and the appearance and user-friendly features of this new edition? Would you not like to avail yourself not only of the dead man's teachings, but to have the benefit of modern scholarship interpreting his findings in the light of the latest scientific and sociological insights?

Does any of this sound familiar? To a large extent, it mirrors what has happened with the Bible. The choice of version of the Holy Scriptures that you make will depend first and foremost upon what you want. Is your primary concern to discover what God actually **said**? Then the accuracy of the translation is paramount, far more important than its readability, its cover, its accompanying notes or its various superficial 'add-ons'. When all is said and done, are you looking for the Word of God, or the words of men?

Could there even be a subliminal thought here in the minds of many, engendered by the kind of preaching with which they are familiar, that they would rather have a version that is not so much 'Thus saith the LORD', as 'We think this is probably what the Lord meant to say...?'

In our view, there must of necessity be a link between the version of the Bible in the pulpits of our land, the declining standards of preaching in our churches, the lower standards that seem acceptable now amongst Christians—especially as regards the day-to-

day application of the Scriptures—and the way in which authority is everywhere denigrated and undermined. Again, it is the battle between absolute standards and relativism.

The Christian who wholeheartedly embraces the Bible's teaching on such fundamental issues as the creating power of God, His sovereignty, grace, and electing mercy, the depravity of man, the primacy of preaching in the saving of the lost and the building up of the Church, the awfulness of Hell and the blessedness of Heaven, will tend to want a Bible that sets forth these things unequivocally and authoritatively. The pulpit will be esteemed as the place where that Word is preached, taught and expounded, line upon line, precept upon precept; every letter, every syllable, and every word is important, for it was uttered by God, and unlike us, He was not given to exaggeration, flannel, or equivocation. Because it is God's Word, it carries tremendous power and authority, and Scripture abounds with examples of those who trusted it, for their blessing and usefulness, and of those who disregarded it, at their peril.

There are at least four particular aspects concerning the importance of God's **every Word** that demand our close attention:

1 The devil is keen to question it, and set it aside: His aim is to do anything and everything he can to undermine the believer's reliance upon the precise statements of God. Back there in the garden of Eden, the devil questioned the **precision** of the Lord God's words to Adam, 'Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' (Genesis 3.1). It seems he picked up on the word 'every', to cast doubt, to unsettle Eve, for the Lord had gone on to qualify this original instruction to her husband, forbidding them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By the time Eve had corrected the serpent's insinuation, she had introduced something God never actually said to Adam, 'neither shall ye touch it', and from

there on she was beguiled. Satan questioned whether God really meant what He said, in threatening death as the wages of sin, 'Ye shall not surely die' (v.4), as if to say, 'God can't have meant actual **death, surely?** What He really meant to say was that He just didn't want you to become like Him, knowing good and evil, so go ahead, you'll not die.'

Here is the first recorded example in the Bible of **interpretation** of what God said, attempting to use other words to explain what He really meant, something the translator must studiously avoid, but with which most modern translations abound!

Throughout Scripture the devil is busy trying to undermine what God says, just a tweak here and there will do, never more so than in the episode of the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the wilderness. On that occasion the devil even quoted Scripture, but he misused it, and omitted several words important to the context. His 'If thou be the Son of God' was seeking to cast aspersions upon the Lord's precious Name, that which God the Father personally bestowed upon Him both at His baptism and at His transfiguration. By seeking to undermine His Name, Satan was attacking His very being and essence, His Deity.

2 At the very beginning of the Bible, and in other key initial places, God's Word spoken and written down is emphasised: The Scriptures leave us in no doubt at all that it is **what God says, and the recording of it**, that is so crucially important. Consider this list of wonderful statements made very early on in just some of the major books of the Bible (bold for emphasis):

Genesis 1.3: And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Psalms 1.1,2: Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor

standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. **But his delight is in the law of the LORD;** and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Isaiah 1.2: Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: **for the LORD hath spoken**

Matthew 1.1: The book of the generation of Jesus Christ

Mark 1.2: As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send **my messenger** before thy face

Luke 1.2: Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were **eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word**

Many believers these days like to own a Bible with the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in red; the Society has always steered firmly away from this policy, 1) because it is interpretative—there are places in the Old Testament where many believe that the Lord Jesus Christ made a pre-incarnate appearance, or where He is personified, but these instances are not all clear or agreed—and 2) because this device tends to give the erroneous impression that the words in red are ‘more important’ than the rest of the Holy Scriptures.

The Society believes that the **whole Bible** is the Word of the Lord God, and as such is of equal authority, infallibility and everlasting worth. Obviously, there are matters of context to be taken into account—the believer is not to take as equally authoritative for **today’s** Christian service passages relating, for example, to the detailed sacrifices and the priesthood system of the Old Testament, alongside New Testament teaching on the way to live the Christian life. Those former Scriptures have been superseded and wonderfully fulfilled in Christ’s one and only sacrifice for His people.

Clearly, throughout the Bible, it is the actual words that God spoke that are important, and

these were written down by the various Biblical penmen in a most painstaking and methodical fashion, rather as the Lord God took care to repeat the exact words on the two tablets of stone that Moses broke in pieces, when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses for the second time.

3 Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Word of God: This is the Father’s great Communication with the world, the Embodiment of His attributes, the Executor of His decrees. He not only came to tell the world of the masterful plan of redemption, to convey in unequalled language the glorious doctrines of the grace of God, but to enact that plan, to accomplish all the promises, and to complete the great work begun when in the counsels of eternity the Triune God determined to save many chosen men and women. So much more than the human mind can grasp or describe is contained in that glorious title, the Word of God. But if the incarnate Word is so wonderful, unique and precise, how can the spoken and written Word of God be undervalued? If every syllable that the Lord spoke was a forerunner of that Embodiment of His speech to follow, then Christians should be most concerned to hunt down and secure the words of the Lord, and, having found them, to do as the man who uncovered the treasure hid in the field, hide it (for safety) and for joy thereof go and sell all that they have, so to speak, and buy the field. Thus should God’s people treasure the accurate translation of the Scripture of truth.

John 1.1: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

4 Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God: In seeking to build up the church of Christ by the salvation of sinners and by the edifying of the saints, we must rely entirely upon the Word of God. ‘The foolishness of preaching’

by which it pleased God to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1.21), must ever be our principal method. The gospel of peace and the glad tidings of good things which we bring (Romans 10.15) are not to be reinterpreted or diluted in any way, otherwise we can scarcely complain if they lose their power. We long to see many ‘being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever’ (1 Peter 1.23).

Perhaps there has never been an age in this land where there are so many groups and ‘churches’ of all sorts which are attempting to gather adherents. Many claim great numbers and significant success, but as long as there is no evident change in the ungodly career of our nation headlong into the pit, we can say with some confidence that these activities are not the work of the Spirit of Christ, Who will ‘reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment’ (John 16.8). Where on the other hand, is the widespread **preaching** of God’s Word written to the unconverted, in our day? If what is preached is a mere ‘interpretation’ or ‘interpolation’ of God’s Word, that will not do.

It is vital therefore that our Bibles not only **contain** but that they actually **are** the entire, unexpurgated and unembellished Word of God. How better to ensure that than to seek out the most faithful and accurate translation in our English language, still unchallenged in those principles after nearly four hundred years, still able to be used of the Lord in the time-honoured way? Can anyone point to a genuine revival effected by the Holy Spirit of God where preaching was not central and paramount, and where the Authorised Version, or a translation of similar provenance, was not greatly used?

In the light of these considerations, we believe that Christians should care greatly about the Bible they use. No doubt there are many faithful and earnest brethren who are unaware of the issues. They may use an edi-

tion of the Scriptures translated substantially from corrupt manuscripts, or which adopts a dynamic equivalence translation method (which endeavours to restate the Hebrew and Greek in such a way as to convey the essence of the original, without necessarily paying much attention to all the original words and nuances). This Society, however, is dedicated to publishing only accurate and trustworthy translations, and it is our prayer and intention that we might be used of the Lord to bring people back to His Word, by declaring in simple terms the principles we stand for relating to the text and its translation. By means of deputation speakers and local representatives we already have contact with many churches and congregations up and down the land, but we also intend to use our *Quarterly Record* in the coming months and years to accomplish this process.

**Sanctify them through thy truth:
thy word is truth.
John 17.17**

Vacancies for deputation speakers/local representatives

Mention of our speakers and representatives leads me conveniently into a matter for which we need much prayer and wisdom. On the front of the list of Local Meetings that normally accompanies this magazine, we have a list of seven names—two are of our full-time deputation speakers, the rest are local representatives. Of the two speakers, Dr. David Allen is inundated with requests to take meetings throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland, even abroad now, whereas Mr. Graham Bidston, wonderfully recovered recently from prostate cancer, is nearing seventy years of age.

Our Scottish Representative Tony Horne has recently been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia, and is undergoing chemotherapy

at the time of writing. Please pray much for Tony and his family as they come to terms with this dark providence.

Now that Pastor Michael Harley has joined our General Committee, it is anticipated that he may have less time available to speak on behalf of the Society.

Mr. David Oldham has recently requested that his speaking engagements be reduced, too.

In the light of these developments affecting most of our speakers and representatives at the same time, the Committee is agreed that the Society needs to seek prayerfully the Lord's provision of up to seven or eight new younger men, who may be led to share the load of speaking engagements. Please join us in bringing this matter before the throne of grace, requesting the Lord to raise up suitable men and bring them to our attention.

TBS (Australia)

Elsewhere in this issue you will find an article by Peter Hallihan on Australia. This is timed to coincide with an expansion of the work in our Australian Branch, as intimated by the advertisement for an administrative assistant in our April edition. By God's gracious provision, a suitable candidate has been found, and an offer of employment has been made and accepted. Mr. Trevor Sullivan, pastor of a small independent Baptist Church in Nanango, Queensland, will have commenced work by the time you read this, God willing.

Following a report and recommendation by the National Secretary, Christopher Tuck, to our General Committee in June, it was resolved to make a substantial donation to enable the work in Australia to expand, particularly by a concerted programme of deputation over the coming months. Not only is it anticipated that many churches and

congregations across that vast land will learn much more about our work, and be encouraged to provide prayer and support, but the opportunities for translation projects relating to countries in the Pacific Rim, and perhaps even deputation work there, can be developed. Please remember this important part of our overseas work in your prayers, and seek the Lord's leading regarding possible new premises there, too.

Thanksgiving for our premises

On 10th October 1994 the Society moved into our current building; in the last three *Quarterly Records* of that year, details were given of the Lord's remarkable provision of these most suitable premises, at a time when we were greatly in need of space to accommodate the expansion of the work. In the magazine for January 1995 (QR 530), there were details of the Service of Thanksgiving held here on 19th November 1994, including the sermon preached on that occasion by the Rev. Professor H. M. Cartwright. This month, therefore, marks the tenth anniversary of our occupation of Tyndale House, and we take this opportunity to record our immense thanks and gratitude to the Lord for such appropriate international headquarters. This year is also the centenary of the Society's taking out its first long lease of premises since its inception, at 7 Bury Street, near the British Museum in central London, so there is opportunity for a double commemoration of the goodness of God.

In the last ten years many millions of Bibles and smaller portions of God's Word have been sent forth into all the world from this place, and we seek the guidance and strength of the Lord to enable us to continue that valuable endeavour for many years to come. '...Without me ye can do nothing' (John 15.5). ■

Threescore Years and Ten and Ten and Ten

June 7th 2004 was a day of celebration at Tyndale House. It was on that day that our beloved caretaker, Mr. Tom Massey, celebrated his 90th birthday. Tom came to the Society some thirty-eight years ago, following a stint as a tank driver in the Army during the Second World War (he remembers with fondness Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, who was Patroness of his outfit) and various other work.

The event of Tom's birthday was celebrated during our daily staff prayer time with the presentation of a Bible (large print!) and a clock to ensure he always makes it to work on time (he's never late).

The General Committee and staff of the Society wish Tom the Lord's richest blessing as he embarks on his tenth decade.



The Treasury

We warmly thank the donors of the following anonymous gifts which have been received since the July *Quarterly Record* went to press. Lancashire £20; Glasgow £30; Northern Ireland £50; Croydon £4.01; Suffolk £35; Edinburgh two of £100; Thornton Heath £10; cash £20, £3.87; anon via CAF £50; Give as you Earn £195.87, £100.46, £16.77; United Kingdom Evangelization Trust three of £100; Charities Aid Foundation £138.21, £128.21; Church Donation three of £50; South West Charitable Giving two of £37.19, £33.69; direct into the bank £30, three of £25, £20; via Speakers £25, £15, £10; Annual General Meeting £708; other £15.00. **Total £2,458.47.**



The Business of the Society

A Report on the 173rd Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at Westminster Chapel, London, on Saturday, 19th June 2004, with the Rev. Malcolm Watts in the Chair. After establishing that the meeting was duly convened and quorate, the Chairman read Titus 2, and then commented on part of verse 10, 'that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things'. In the course of his address, he made the following points:

The words speak of two important truths: (1) doctrine and (2) practice.

1. Doctrine

The words refer to the *doctrine* of God our Saviour. To the Apostle Paul, sound, pure, orthodox doctrine was the most excellent thing in all the world. It is granted, of course, that we all need the illumination of the Spirit that we might discern aright the doctrine of God's Word, but where there is

that illumination, the doctrine of God is a tremendous blessing to God's people. It warms their hearts and it changes their lives. Therefore Paul insists in his letters that ministers hold sound doctrine and exhorts those ministers to preach sound doctrine to believers that they may be established in it and blessed through it.

The doctrine is further defined here as the doctrine of *God our Saviour*, the doctrine concerning the salvation of God's people. The Chairman went on to expound that that phrase implies that God is:

- ◆ The great Originator of that salvation;
- ◆ The Revealer of that salvation, revealing it to patriarchs and prophets;
- ◆ The Securer of that salvation, when in the fulness of time He sent His only Son, who came, accomplished and obtained salvation for His people through His obedient life, through His atoning death;
- ◆ The Keeper of this salvation; where He bestows it in the hearts of men and

women, He preserves it so that they are kept by the power of God and at the end He brings this salvation to consummation, bringing us into full possession of it.

2. Practice

The Chairman went on to show how the Apostle moves from doctrine to *practice*: the thought expressed is that Christians are to *display* the doctrine, to make it wonderfully conspicuous. As a beautiful picture can be enhanced by an appropriate frame, so we make Christian teaching attractive if we exhibit its power and truth in our lives.

Alluding briefly to recent difficulties in the Society, Mr. Watts commented that there should not be trouble if all present are wearing Christian 'clothing', ensuring that our conduct is becoming the gospel of Jesus Christ. He went on to spell out what some of these items of adornment should be: the garments of

- ◆ Sincerity
- ◆ Kindness
- ◆ Forgiveness
- ◆ Goodness
- ◆ Forbearance and patience

Mr. Watts summed up by saying that we should not divorce business from spirituality. Attention to the proper business of this Society, which must be done in a proper and efficient way, must be matched by godliness and holiness. He observed that he had learned over many years that to enter a business meeting without first remembering God and hearing His Word, and feeling something of the power of it, sometimes brings out the very worst in us. He ended with an exhortation that all should be determined that grace would subdue each member during the meeting and that what was 'worn' in the way of

Christian behaviour and conduct would be such as honours our Saviour and the truth we espouse. Then, he believed, God would meet with us and bless us. But He would not approve of those who were deliberately disruptive and who set themselves against the unity and peace of God's work. They would bring upon themselves that correction which God metes out. 'But,' he concluded, 'let us as a people meet in God's fear, in God's love, and determine that this afternoon we will live as Christians. Amen.'

The Chairman then led the meeting in prayer, before summarising the Committee's Review of the matters raised by the Investigating Committee's Report of 2003. He made the following points:

■ **The Constitution.** The General Committee did not propose any changes to the Constitution. However, some internal rules would be drawn up addressing certain procedural and administrative matters.

■ **Membership.** The membership database was being reviewed, and the membership form (and its web site counterpart) was to be redesigned in time for January 2005 renewals, God willing.

■ **Incorporation.** The General Committee had rejected the suggestion that the Society become a limited company.

■ **Management structures.** These had been, and would continue to be, subject to regular review by the Committee.

■ **Employment contracts.** A new staff handbook had been substantially prepared in draft form, to take account of recent legislative developments. Meanwhile, the Society's disciplinary procedures were deemed to be perfectly

adequate at the present time.

■ **The General Secretary & his Assistant.**

Because of Mr. Paul Rowland's illness, no progress had been made in implementing any structural changes to their respective roles. However, thanks was expressed to the Lord that Mr. David Larlham had been enabled to take on the day-to-day responsibilities that Mr. Rowland had previously undertaken, which bore testimony to the progress already made by Mr. Rowland in handing over many of these functions to his Assistant, to enable him to concentrate on more strategic issues.

■ **Translations of the Scriptures.** The General Committee had spent many months compiling a succinct yet comprehensive statement of the Society's historic position on the doctrine of Scripture and the Biblical Text. This would be used to ensure that all working in the Editorial Department or on translation projects were fully in sympathy with the Society's historic position on the text of Holy Scripture.

■ **General conduct of the Society's affairs.** The expenditure and efficiency of the Society's operations were being reviewed. The Committee was beginning a review of the role of auxiliaries, deputation speakers and regional representatives.

■ **Election of Committee members.** The practice was being continued of providing full details of all members of the Committee in advance of the motion for the Committee's re-election.

Subject to one minor wording change, the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 14th June 2003, which had already been circulated, were

approved *nem con*. This was followed by greetings being conveyed to the meeting from the Society's Vice-Presidents, absent Committee members and overseas Branches and from Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting in The Netherlands.

In the absence of the General Secretary through ill-health, the Assistant to the General Secretary, Mr. D. Larlham, then presented the Annual Report. In doing so, he commented on Mr. Rowland's slow improvement of health, and expressed the prayerful desire that he would be enabled to make a full recovery in due course. He then highlighted various aspects of the Society's work, and expressed his gratitude to the Lord, and to staff and supporters, for the way it had been maintained over the previous year. There were no questions on the Report, and the following motion was then put to the Meeting and carried by a large majority:

THAT this Society reverently acknowledges its complete dependence upon Almighty God, reaffirms its constant adherence to the Scriptural doctrines and principles upon which the work was established and seeks the Divine blessing upon its endeavours to promote the worldwide circulation of Protestant or uncorrupted versions of the Divinely inspired Holy Scriptures which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, and which are 'profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Timothy 3.16,17); and that the Report and Audited Financial Statements, a summary of which has been printed in the

Report, copies of which have been circulated, be adopted.

The next item of business was the re-appointment of the General Committee. The following motion was put to the Meeting and carried by a large majority:

THAT the following gentlemen constitute the General Committee for the ensuing year, with power to fill up any vacancies in their number in the interval of the Annual General Meetings: Mr. G. R. Burrows, Mr. G. D. Buss, the Rev. B. G. Felce, Pastor M. J. Harley, Mr. A. K. Jones, the Rev. E. T. Kirkland, the Rev. D. Silversides, the Rev. J. P. Thackway, Mr. J. Turnbull, the Rev. M. H. Watts.

The final motion put to the Meeting was also passed by a large majority, namely:

THAT Messrs. Jacob Cavenagh & Skeet be appointed Auditors for the year.

Under 'Any other business' the Chairman reported, with regret, that Pastor W. Roy Mohon was resigning as Honorary Treasurer with effect from the end of the Annual Meeting, owing to his other commitments, combined with the length of journey necessary to the Society's offices in Morden and some recent health problems. Pastor Mohon remained an enthusiastic supporter of the Society.

Other matters dealt with briefly under 'Any other business' included: the cost of hiring Westminster Chapel for the meeting (the Committee is seeking an alternative venue); appreciation expressed for the quality of the Society's greetings cards; clarification of the position regarding life membership (new life

memberships have not been available for many years; however, existing life members remain in membership so long as they agree with the principles of the Society); and the new draft Charities Bill (which had not yet been considered by the Committee).

After brief concluding comments, the Business Meeting was closed in prayer by Mr. Watts.

● **The Service**

Following a short break, a service of worship was held, at which the preacher was Pastor W. Roy Mohon, Honorary Treasurer. His sermon, lightly edited, follows.





Service following the 173rd Annual General Meeting 19th June 2004

MINISTRY OF THE WORD Pastor W. Roy Mohon

You will find our text in the Gospel according to John, chapter 10, verses 34 to 36. Our subject is the absolute reliability of Scripture. **'Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?'**

Who is Jesus? Who is your Jesus? We who are older have lived through a host of blasphemous suggestions: a Jewish monk perhaps; in the rock-and-roll era, *Jesus Christ Superstar*; to the Jehovah's Witness, a mere created angel; to the Mormon, a polygamist. Heresies are not new. The Apostle John wrote his Gospel against the background of the philosophical loges.

The Apostle John commences his Gospel with the astonishing truth that you find in John 1.1: **'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'**

The following truth you find in verse 14: **'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.'** This is **our** Jesus: the Eternal Son of God come in the flesh to save sinners by the gift of Himself. Is this **your** Jesus, this wonderful Jesus, the Lamb of God, who sacrificed Himself to pay the price of sin and to redeem poor, mortal sinners such as we are? This astonishing Jesus, the Eternal Son of God, came into a world of sin.

It is equally astonishing that He, the **Living Word**, the **Eternal Word**, should place such honour upon this **written Word** as to rest His case upon it. **'Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law...?'** Surely, this humbles us to a reverent approach to the Bible, especially in connection with its absolute authority? Here is the Eternal Son of God Himself, come in the flesh, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law that we might receive the adoption of sons and He has said the Scripture cannot be broken. This

absolute reliability is of the Word of God written. Absolute reliability: we cannot say that of our Prime Ministers, we cannot say that of our Presidents, we cannot say that of our doctors, our lawyers, our teachers, our scientists. They all make mistakes and they get it wrong. But we can say it of our Bible. Why do we have such an unshakeable confidence in the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament Scriptures? These three thoughts come to us this afternoon:

We have this unshakeable confidence because of **what** the Bible is.

We have this unshakeable confidence because of **the word** of Jesus about it.

We have this unshakeable confidence because of **the way** that the Lord Jesus Christ used it.

What the Bible Is

We have an unshakeable confidence in the Bible as utterly reliable because of what it is. **'Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken...'**

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself gives us three fundamental descriptions of the Scriptures. He calls them **your law**. **'Is it not written in your law...?'** We know that the Jews did have a threefold division of the Old Testament. It is referred to by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as recorded in Luke 24.44: **'And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.'** The Psalms are used as a description of the third division of the Old Testament because they were at the head of that particular division. The Law, the Prophets and the Psalms: these are the holy writings.

However, the quote of interest to us is from Psalm 82.6, and it raises the question: how is it

then Law? **'Is it not written in your law...?'** but this is in the **Psalms**. If you are a student of the Bible you know that Genesis 1–50, Exodus 1–18, nineteen chapters of Numbers and the first four chapters of Deuteronomy are all history—spiritual history indeed, but they are history—91 of the 187 chapters of the Pentateuch are history. The Law is fifty percent spiritual history. So the Law itself is not merely commandments; the Law as it is being used here emphasises the binding authority of the Word of God.

This absolute authority of the Word of God commands your submission and mine, too. I was religious before I was saved. I went to church, I sat in my pew, I gave my offerings and so on. I tried to be as good as I could to be a Christian. But you see what was missing in my life: I had never been brought into submission to the Word of God, to the authority of the Word of God. If you asked me if I believed in the Bible, I would have said, yes, indeed I do. But I did not know what it was to bring my life and my belief into submission to the absolute authority of the Word of God. Do you?

This is so fundamental. This is the starting point of Christian experience. This is the beginning of our new life. In those words in Isaiah 8.19–20, **'And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'** Those of us who are engaged in open air preaching know that when you go into the market square or the high street and you take this Book and you open this Book, before you utter a word the situation has changed; you can see by the reaction of some of the people in the market square that the situation has changed. **'We will not have this man to rule over us,'** their hearts are already saying. The Word of God has been opened and an authority has come into the presence of every sinner who hears it, an authority that demands an absolute submission.

sion in bowing before Jesus Christ as the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the great Prophet raised up like unto Moses and the great High Priest of His people. The last word and the first word belong to the Word of God, because it is the only Word.

The Lord Jesus Christ says, **'If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came...'** This description **the Word of God** points to its origin: the Author of the Bible is God. When the Lord Jesus Christ was in that deep conflict with Satan in the days of His flesh, He answered and He said to him, **'It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God'** (Matthew 4.4). But was not the Bible written by men, men like Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? Yes, indeed; but by men so carried along by the Spirit of God that without being reduced to robots, what they wrote was what God spoke. It is as Peter tells us in his epistle, **'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost'** (2 Peter 1.21).

The **process** is a mystery. It is incomprehensible to us. But the **product** is not a mystery. The product of what took place when holy men of God were moved along by the Holy Spirit was a God-breathed Word, the Word of God written, that Word of which the Apostle wrote in 2 Timothy 3.16–17, **'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works'**. That is what the Bible says, that you can be thoroughly furnished for a life of holiness by the study of the Bible alone. It will equip you for everything that you need to come to God and find forgiveness, and to live that life of godliness. The Apostolic faith, the faith to which we hold, is that of which David spoke; the **Psalmist** said it, but it was **God's** Word. So when the New Testament Church was in a time of extremity and thankfulness to God for His intervention, they prayed, as we read in Acts 4.24–25, **'Lord, thou**

art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?' The mouth was the mouth of His servant, but the word was the Word of God.

Numerous Godly prophets came along and the introduction to their message was, 'Thus saith the Lord.' 'Not my word,' Isaiah would say, 'but God's Word.' 'Not my word,' Jeremiah would say, 'but God's Word.' 'Not my word,' Malachi would say, 'but God's Word.'

The Lord Jesus Christ refers to the Old Testament as **the Scripture**. **'If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken...'**

You remember how it was: the teacher used to come along, look over your shoulder as you were writing your work at your desk. You have a nice **script**, she might say if you were doing well. That was the same as saying, you have **good writing**. Jesus is talking about something **written**. **'Is it not written in your law...?'** This is the Scripture, the written Word of God.

We are not depending upon something by way of recollection. How you wished you had recorded that telephone call! You scratch your head and say, 'What time was that meeting that I was supposed to be attending?' 'Which ward of the hospital was it that I was supposed to be going to?' Oh, you wish that you had written down the message on your telephone pad. Then you could go and you could read and you would know what it was that you had to do. In the same way, here we are this afternoon, not trying to **recollect** what God said but **reading** what God said. We have the open Bible before us. We can have it read to us. It is here in permanent form.

So the Apostle Peter, who heard the voice of God speaking from Heaven on the Mount of Transfiguration, could later write in 2 Peter 1.18, **'And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy**

mount'. But what does he go on to say? **'We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation'** (vss. 19–20). We have an unshakeable confidence in the Scripture because its Author is God, its authority is absolute and the access to it is permanent. God has preserved His Word and He will preserve His Word until that day when the Lord Jesus Christ returns with great power and glory to judge the living and the dead and we are all gathered before the Judgement Seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body. Will your profession in that day be that you believed the Word of God written, that you received it, that it transformed your life? You took its promises, you believed upon the Saviour revealed in it and by the grace of God, and the power of His Spirit, you endeavoured day by day to live according to it in holiness of life to the glory of His Name.

The Word of Jesus about the Scriptures

Now secondly, we have an unshakeable confidence in the Bible as utterly reliable because of this word of Jesus about it: **'If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken...'**

Scripture cannot be broken. Not so my word to you. Not so the theological textbooks' word to you about the Bible. After all the vicious attacks that have been made upon the authority and accuracy of the Bible, I say to you this afternoon that Jesus said—our Lord Jesus Christ said—**'the scripture cannot be broken'**. Do you see that? Do you understand that? This is the doctrine of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the Scripture in which we trust.

Now the Lord Jesus Christ is not speaking about the manuscript in David's handwriting.¹

I do not know where that would have been at the time the Lord Jesus Christ was speaking. Long since worn out, no doubt. Yet Jesus answered them, **'Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?'** Now He is not speaking about the manuscript in David's handwriting. He is speaking about what was accessible to them in their own day. In the original Greek this is a perfect passive participle. The Greek grammars would tell us it means 'written so that you have it now', something accomplished with continuing effect. The Lord Jesus Christ was talking about the Old Testament in their temple, the Old Testament in their synagogue pulpits, the Old Testament in their studies back at home: a God-breathed and God-preserved Word.

On another occasion, given in John 5.39, Jesus had spoken to the Jews, saying to them, **'Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me'**. The Scriptures that you have in your temple, in your synagogues, in your study, go and read them, go and search them. He did not say, search **for** the Scriptures as something that was lost, as the woman had to do in connection with her lost coin: she had to search for it because it was lost. The Lord Jesus Christ is not saying to the Jews, search **for** the Scriptures because we do not know where they are and we do not know which ones they are. He says to them, search the Scriptures which you have because they are they which testify of me. These Scriptures are so reliable, testifying to your soul of who He is and what He has done and how He as God is the Saviour of the world, how He has died upon an accursed cross to take that wrath which belonged to sinners such as we are. We by believing upon His Name can be justified by faith alone, knowing that we can trust this written Word about the Lord Jesus.

Now with respect to this reliability of the Scriptures, we learn of it from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The theologians can repeat this, they can repackage this, but they cannot change this without going against the Word of God itself, without going against God Himself,

without going against Christ Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ says that the preserved Scripture is reliable **to a word**. **'If he called them gods...'**: the whole argument rests upon a word, **'gods'**. You have the same in Galatians 3.16 where the Apostle Paul rests his entire doctrine at that particular point on a word of the Old Testament. **'Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ'**. The Apostle Paul, following the example of His Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, knows that one word will do it. We have the same here: **'If he called them gods...'**. One word of Scripture will be sufficient to demonstrate the case.

We understand from this that the Scriptures in the original languages have been transmitted in such a degree of purity as to make appeal to a single word possible. These documents in the original languages in our hands have **verbal** authenticity and we cannot accept that variant readings impinge upon the verbal accuracy of the Scripture, because any divergent readings are no part of Scripture. Our reformers at the time of the Reformation were not ignorant men. They were aware of the fact that variants existed and they discussed them on a case-by-case basis. But they would not allow either sectarians or the Roman Catholics to lessen the authority of the Scriptures in our hands because some variants existed. This was Scriptural and was according to the doctrine and the practice of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ believed that the Scripture in their hands could not be broken. This is so in the line of faithful transmission.

William Hendriksen in his commentary on John's Gospel says in connection with Scripture that 'it is absolutely indestructible, no matter how man may regard it. The Old Testament *as it lies there in written form!* is inspired, infallible, authoritative'¹² In consequence of this teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the practice of the Saviour Himself in reverently handling the Scriptures, we must

therefore reject the idea that the church had a corrupted text of Scripture through all these centuries until the 19th century scholars came along. This assumption that has been used with such destructive effect in connection with many people who call themselves Christians is thoroughly unscriptural and contrary to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. No theory of textual criticism can be relied upon that involves the denial of the Scriptural truth that God has preserved His Word in the hands of His Church through the centuries. It is unbreakable down to a single word, so that you today might put your trust in this Word of God written. You today might stake all, even life itself, upon the things which are written in the Bible and trust this revealed Saviour, Jesus Christ, and Him only.

In this age of multi-faith worship, when such worship has become the politically correct thing, we are going to stand to the end for the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ. **'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me'** (John 14.6). We are going to stand upon the claims of Jesus Christ because they are written in this Bible which we receive as the authoritative Word of God inscripturated and unbreakable down to a single word. We are not to imagine and we are not prepared to concede that at some point in time some manuscripts will be discovered that will show that all this time the church has been relying upon an imperfect and corrupted textual tradition.

The teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ requires acceptance of the reliability of the ecclesiastically transmitted text as being in **His** mind: not in the preacher's mind; not in the theologian's mind; not in Louis Berkhof's mind or Charles Hodges' mind or John Calvin's mind or whoever else we might want to mention in this connection. It is in the mind of Godly men, yes, but for this one and only reason: it was first in the mind of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. In His mind there was no disconnection, no disjunction, no rupture between immediately inspired autographs and

the faithful copies of uninspired men that witnessed to them. The Scripture **in your hands** cannot be broken. Christ refers to a providentially preserved, immediately inspired Word of God written that was accurate to a word.

The question was put to us this afternoon, do we understand what we are standing for? I trust we do. Why does the Trinitarian Bible Society take such a stand in reproducing in English the Authorised Version exclusively? Do we know why? Can we give an answer? We are not making claims for the Authorised Version that it is perfect, because every translation of the Word of God must choose words of men to translate the original languages. We are not claiming the translation's perfection, but why are we standing for the Authorised Version? It is for this reason: **'Accuracy, Accuracy, Accuracy'**. We are standing for the Authorised Version because of the **accuracy** of the underlying Hebrew and Greek texts. We are standing for the **accuracy** of the Authorised Version because of the translation principles upon which it was made. We are standing for the **accuracy** of the Authorised Version because it unambiguously keeps to the originals' devotional address to Almighty God. To God the Father we say, **'Thou art God'**. To God the Son we say, **'Thou art God'**. To God the Holy Spirit we say, **'Thou art God'**. To the Divine Being we do not say, **'You are God'**, an ambiguous way of speaking capable of interpretation as singular or plural, but to the Divine Being we say, **'Thou art God'**, exclusively singular. In our devotion, we have this accuracy in the Authorised Version: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, not three gods but one God, the incomprehensible mystery of God blessed for ever.

The Way the Lord Jesus Christ used the Word

Now we have, in the third place, unshakable confidence in the Bible as utterly reliable because of the way that the Lord Jesus Christ used it. You see here from this passage our Lord's example. Our Lord's example was

to apply the sacred text to matters of dispute. Is there a difference of opinion? Is there a difference of doctrine? Then let us go to the Law and to the Testimony and let us have it resolved out of the Word of God written.

I would like you to notice in this particular passage that our Lord's example was to apply the sacred text to matters of dispute and to do so in a way that recognised the authority of Scripture as the final word in settling controversies. **'Is it not written in your law...?'** This will decide the matter. This will end the matter. Whatever the Scripture says, that is it, that closes the argument, and that demonstrates the truth of the matter. Our Lord's example was to apply the sacred text to matters of dispute and to do so in a way that recognised its authority as the final word in settling controversies while also affirming its utter reliability as incapable of error: **'Is it not written in your law'** and **'the scripture cannot be broken'**. All matters are decided here: matters of doctrine and matters of practice, matters of faith and matters of behaviour.

In pursuing His argument, it was enough for the Saviour to demonstrate that the basis of His argument was Scriptural. Once done, His case was established. Therefore, there is no possibility of the Scriptures being altered in any way. That is why Satan has had to enlist so many scholars over the last hundred years to undermine the authority of the Bible and to stop people referring to the Bible, because once the authority of the Bible is accepted, once that authority is submitted to, people's lives change. They are transformed. When you come across someone who seriously accepts the authority of the Bible as the Word of God written, supreme and absolute in its statements and unbreakable and authentic down to a word, it is no good trying to sell that person relativism, that **you** can choose how you live your life, that **you** can choose your own morality. It is no good trying to sell that person situation ethics as though there are no absolute standards so that when you get into a particular situation you have got to work it

out for yourself in that situation since there are no absolute standards to refer to. You cannot do that to man or woman, boy or girl, young man or young woman who says: 'This Bible is the Word of God written, it has absolute authority, it is unbreakable down to a word, every word is authentic, I trust it, I believe it, I follow it, and I live by it.'

You see what a challenge we are to the society of our own day as it staggers around in its relativistic morality. I remember some years ago, I believe it was the Chief Inspector of Schools who said something to the effect that it is the dragon of relativism that has to be slain because the children no longer have any absolute standards of right and wrong and do not know how to make choices on the basis of absolute standards. How many of our young men in consequence have gone out and committed suicide before they reached the age of thirty because they needed the Word of God? The young men need the authority of the Word of God, this Word which is unbreakable.

You read these verses in John 10.34–36, **'Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?'** You read it and scratch your head wondering how exactly this argument fits the situation of the Saviour being accused of blasphemy. This reaction of the Jews is not too easy for us to understand, and I am in no position this afternoon to go into an extended exposition with regard to this. But let me just quote some very wise words from the great reformer John Calvin, who was also a great commentator on the Scripture—and do not let anyone convince you that John Calvin is too scholarly or too intellectual for the average Christian to read. He is intensely devotional. He sums things up in this little paragraph:

The argument is not drawn from equals but from the less to the greater.... Scripture gives the name of *gods* to those on whom God has conferred an honourable office. He whom God has separated, to be distinguished above all others, is far more worthy of this honourable title. Hence it follows, that they are malicious and false expounders of Scripture, who admit the first, but take offence at the second.³

The arrow of the Word of God was aimed right into the hearts of these men. Examine your heart. See what is really there and how important it is that we keep on heeding that approach of the Saviour. He is interested in **your** heart. He is interested in what is there. When you are backsliding and growing cold to the things of Christ, He comes and challenges you about that. Perhaps this afternoon there is someone here who has been going to church for years, has been going to church all his life and yet does not know Jesus Christ in a personal way as Saviour. One of the things that was mightily convincing with me before I was saved was the fact that I was kneeling down at my bedside and I was saying the words of the Lord's Prayer, beginning with those words, 'Our Father which art in heaven', and the thought kept coming insistently into my mind that I was praying 'Our Father which art in heaven', but I did not know God as my Father; I called myself a Christian but I did not know Christ as my Saviour, Jesus the Eternal Son come in the flesh.

Now my friends, we are unashamedly Trinitarian. We accept the claims of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The blood which was shed at Calvary in which we trust we regard as being of infinite worth. I say to Jehovah's Witnesses when they come to my door, 'If Jesus was just a created being, everything He did in His life and in His death He had to do for Himself'; only if that claim was not upon Jesus with respect to Himself could He do anything for others. But the Eternal Son of God did not have to keep that law for

Himself. He did not need to die accursed upon that tree for Himself, pure holy Saviour that He was, but he needed to die to save sinners such as we are, so undeserving. **'...Feed the church of God'**, said the Apostle, **'which he hath purchased with his own blood'** (Acts 20.28). Elsewhere he says: The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2.20).

Now you see that Scripture must settle every controversy. We have an unshakeable confidence in it to do that and we thus have the challenging task of distributing uncorrupted versions of the Holy Scriptures according to the Trinitarian Bible Society Constitution. Regarding foreign language versions, I suppose we in Stockton-on-Tees thought that we were thereby supporting ministers of the gospel in other lands far away. But we have found that the foreign missions are now in our own high streets, and because of the influx of asylum seekers we in Stockton have needed Turkish Bibles, Farsi Bibles for the Iranians, French Bibles and Arabic Bibles. In this role of the Trinitarian Bible Society has been invaluable. The Lord has brought the world to Britain. Have you prayerfully meditated on the potential in that? There are so many people in so many different lands who are now here on our doorstep. People who have never had a Bible in their own language in their hands before can be given one: in London, in Stockton-on-Tees, in Bedford, and wherever else it might be. Have you prayerfully meditated on the potential in that?

Dear friends, this is no time for our hands to hang down or our knees to be feeble. The tide of God's purposes hastens on and we must catch that tide and go with it so that the strongholds of Satan might fall and brands be plucked from the burning, fulfilling the Word of God.

I have almost finished, but let me share with you what I did this morning. I went to Buckingham Palace. I saw the great gates there of the palace thrown open wide and out came the soldiers of the Queen and a silver band

went to the right and the brass band went to the left, playing as they went. Their dress was immaculate—there is no other word for it—immaculate as they proudly played in honour of the Queen. The crowds were there to see them. My thoughts anticipated what our Chairman said this afternoon: 'Display the doctrine'. I looked at these soldiers and I thought, yes, we are soldiers, too, soldiers of the King. Are we so concerned that we might put honour upon Christ, that we might point by our lives to Christ, that we might put on our best clothes for Christ? As I watched, a little tear rolled down my cheek because I thought, here are soldiers of the Queen and look at all these crowds from many different nations gathered to see the soldiers of the Queen: what kind of day will it be in Britain when it happens once again that the crowds gather for the soldiers of the **King**; when they want to come and hear the preaching of the gospel; when the lives of Christians are so compelling that this one and that one from this nation and that nation comes and says, **'Sir, we would see Jesus!'** Oh, what a challenge!

The tear rolled down my cheek but that is not enough. We have got to live the life. What an opportunity we have, with this treasured Society which is in our hands, that by wise and careful stewardship, the Word of God might penetrate throughout all nations unto the ends of the earth. I will let David have the last word from Psalm 22.27. It amazes me the way the Psalm begins with the Messiah's cry **'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'** and yet in verse 27 we have that Word of God saying, **'All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.'** Amen. So be it.

Endnotes:

¹By reference to the marginal reading, 'A Psalm for Asaph'

²William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969), p. 128.

³John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., William Pringle, trans. (Edinburgh: the Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 1.419.

Good things in big packages:



TRINITARIAN BIBLE SOCIETY (AUSTRALIA)



BY C. P. HALLIHAN

Perth, Western Australia, is the most remote state capital in the world. Sydney, New South Wales, is the world's largest conurbation, twice the size of Beijing, six times the size of Rome. Turn the map of Australia upside



Perth, Western Australia

down to see a near replica outline of the contiguous United States of America. Australia has the world's largest population of free range camels. There are cattle stations in Australia that are significantly larger than the State of Texas! The first feature length film in the world was produced by the Australian Salvation Army in 1900, and called *Soldiers of the Cross*.

This little collection of striking information is a by-product of recent 'reading up', followed by discussion with Christopher Tuck, National Secretary of Trinitarian Bible Society (Australia), about the work of the Society in Australia. The business of the discussion was the needs, expectations and problems attending the furtherance of the Society's aims in Australia. In general, if not in detail, these are very similar for all our branches—Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, USA, and indeed for the work in the UK, too—with the exception of the distances involved. Although this article focuses on Australia, it should be taken as urging renewed and prayerful interest in the worldwide work of the Society through all the branches.¹

Religious Scene

Through the 1990s, Buddhism reportedly showed the largest numerical increase in

Australia. The 2001 census showed almost 300,000 Australian Muslims, present in all States and Territories.² There are over five million Roman Catholics, nearly 30% of the population, in the Commonwealth of Australia.

Amongst Protestant churches there is the range that one would expect: various alignments of Presbyterian, Baptist, Independent and Free Churches, Brethren, older Pentecostalist like the Assemblies of God, more recent Charismatic, and, of course, the Anglican Church. The whole spectrum of doctrinal and prophetic persuasion, or lack of it, is represented, together with the sadly familiar variation of consistency in the connection between profession and practice. A gratuitous reputation for conservatism can be acquired by a strong stand on some issues, whilst others are ignored, downplayed, or kept at a distance. For example, the clear implication of a statement by one of Australia's prominent Evangelicals is that whilst believing the Bible is Evangelical (a 'good thing?')—teaching Creation is redneck Fundamentalism (a 'bad thing?'). One Church body does make an explicit declaration on the matter of the text-basis of Scripture,³ and some others maintain an historic commitment to the Authorised Version, but the New International Version would seem to be the Bible most generally in use. We record with thankfulness that across this whole range there are individuals and congregations who make use of the Authorised Version and are sympathetic towards the Society's distinctive position on the textual basis and translation principles necessary in all Bible work.

Society Distinctives

When people think of the distinctive position of the Society, attention usually focuses almost exclusively on the use or

non-use of the Authorised Version in English-speaking countries. (Please consult the back cover of this issue of the *QR* for a broader, if succinct, declaration of the aims of the Society!) Use of the AV is the outworking of conviction as to the very nature of the Scriptures and their witness to the whole work of redemption in the Person of Christ.⁴ Any fragmented, subjective attitude to the Bible too easily goes along with indifference towards the issues of textual and translational integrity. It is greatly refreshing, therefore, to learn that a major enthusiasm in TBS (Australia) is to declare and demonstrate the whole doctrine of Scripture, with the principles and ministry of TBS as necessarily and comfortably derived from that.

This has been the foundation of recent intensive deputation work and lectures across the continent, and reaching Aboriginal groups in Western Australia. Such commitment to inform and expand awareness is widely needed. Even amongst our supporters there is at times a timidity about the 'issues.' In deputation work, in the UK as well as in Australia, we hear the request—'don't talk about texts or versions, just tell us about the work.' The work is indeed 'to publish and distribute the Holy Scriptures throughout the world in many languages'—and accounts of such distribution and reception make good hearing, generating praise and thankfulness—but we cannot disengage it from the equal aim 'to promote Bible translations which are accurate and trustworthy'. The burden to engage interest and support for the whole ministry of TBS is being vigorously addressed by TBS (Australia), with a breadth of vision which extends to the Pacific area generally, and to Myanmar.

Problems

Perhaps the most urgent problem is the oldest—the labourers are few! This is compounded by the fact that the distances are great. Mr. M.F. Stuart, President of TBS (Australia), is located in Perth, Western Australia; Mr. J. Marshall, Chairman, is in Sydney, New South Wales; Mr. C. Tuck, National Secretary, is in Nambour, north of Brisbane, Queensland. To connect those places with 'crow-flight' lines on a sketch map would give a triangle with sides of approximately 2,700 x 2,500 x 650 miles. The administrative office, heroically and fruitfully manned by Miss Aleida Wallis, is currently situated in Grafton, about two-thirds of the way between Sydney and Nambour.⁵

Here's a task: plan a meeting for these people, which is the most sparing of time and cost effective: it must include one or more speakers' meetings in, say, Adelaide, 1,000 miles from Grafton, and one of the men must respond to an unexpected new engagement in Darwin, 2,600 miles north of Perth. Only one of the men is employed full time in TBS work, so you will have to manoeuvre round each man's availability. When you have done that, listen to the great cries of 'Same here!' from our other Branches!

Pray for the practical support and maintenance of this work, for the health and endurance of these labourers and their families. Pray for more labourers of like mind to take up the work. As you pray, bear in mind the hurtful jibes of 'jet-set

deputation' aimed at those who judge it more expedient to fly to Adelaide, speak on four or five days, and fly back to be with their own family and church, than to drive for two days, speak once, just possibly twice, drive for two more days and arrive home wrecked for family and ministry at the end of the week.

What can you do with the 'dollar for a Bible' contributions? Yes, I know, receive them gladly and put them to use! But when people make an abrasive demand that 'nothing is to go on administration, only for the Bible', what are you to do? How does the speaker get to and from the meeting where he receives the contribution and its strings? Who looks after the accounts and receipts? Leaving aside the initial production of the Bible and shipping it to Australia—ask where is it to be stored, how is it to be packaged and posted, and who looks after these aspects of the work? And—who is it, amongst all those involved, that the donor doesn't trust? Please pray for a whole view of the work, not only in the distinctives of the TBS but in the practicalities of being a Bible society, and for those who, in every Branch, accept the obligations and stewardship of these practicalities at no small cost to themselves, their families and their churches.

The problem of small numbers and great distances, the problem of skewed perceptions of the practical aspects of the work, these are very real, but cannot obscure the

greater problem. There is what almost amounts to a 'wilful ignorance' about the modern Bible scene. It is not a problem confined to Australia, and is best summed up, in the query, 'who packed your Bible?'⁶ Evangelical, Reformed, Independent, non-denominational, who packed your Bible, and did they tamper with it? Do you know what is in, and what is added to or what is left out of, the version you use? Do you know the reasons why these choices were made by the editors/publishers of the version that you use? Have you left your Scripture heritage unattended at any time, where others may have tampered with it? TBS (Australia) is bursting both to ask and to answer these questions wherever an opening can be secured. Please pray that such openings will be appointed and anointed of God, not only in Australia but throughout the ministry of our Society in the United Kingdom and every Branch.

Conclusion

In the realm of TBS, what is a Branch? The scribbled nature of my notes made whilst with Christopher Tuck in a delightful garden at the old railway station, Scotby, in Cumbria, July 2004, prevent me from quoting his words verbatim on this, but they were to this effect:

TBS (Australia) *is a Branch*,⁷ it is not independent. It is responsible to, and a part of, the Trinitarian Bible Society which has its Headquarters in London; it is the Society's agent in Australia and



is an organic part of the Society. Decisions of the General Committee in London are worked out on the ground in Australia.



Brisbane, Queensland

Equally, whilst fulfilling a very active role in sales and grant distribution, especially in schools and colleges, the Branch is not just a conveniently remote Bible repository. The southeast coast of Australia is superbly situated to function as a hub for the whole of the Pacific, not only in Bible distribution but also in the potential for hands-on involvement in propagating the whole ministry of the Society in this region, and discovery and use of latent talents and possible Bible projects in the languages in the Pacific Islands, Indonesia, the Philippines, Fiji, Malaysia and even to China. In this the Branch does not seek, nor have remit, to act as an inserted layer of bureaucracy, but as facilitator and expeditor of the whole work of the Word of God for which the TBS stands.

The General Committee of the TBS, two members of which are also members of the Committee of TBS (Australia), has indicated continued willingness to support positive expansion of the work in Australia. Please do join us in prayer, that all the implications and responsibilities implied in this will be realised plainly and planned for in a faithful and righteous

way; that provision for the work will be seen to come appropriately to the needs; and that the time, talents and experience of yet more labourers will be stirred up and drawn to the work.

Then, please, do the same for Brazil, and Dr. T. Gilmer; Canada and Mr. G. den Boer; New Zealand and Mr. U. Haringa; U.S.A. and Mr. J. Stehouwer. Miss Wallis has been mentioned in connection with the work of the Society in Australia—in each of the Branches there is an equally dedicated staff who would rejoice in the awareness of your remembering them in prayer. If you have internet connection you could log on to the Society's website, www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org, and go to 'Branches'. You will find links to TBS (Australia), TBS (USA), and, if your Portuguese is up to it, our Brazilian Branch, for more information and names. The Branches are there—branch out in your interest and in your prayers. And be sure that you do know who packed your Bible!

endnotes

1 In *Quarterly Record* 536, July-September 1996, there was a short article about Australia. Please refer to it for general background information. Text-only copies of the article are available on request.

2 Afghan camel drivers account for the first Australian Mosque, built in 1861.

3 The Presbyterian Reformed Church insists on the use of the Received Text or the Majority Text, and of the Authorised Version or the New King James Bible.

4 I mean the unity and interdependence of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation cohering in this great matter.

5 On the matter of distances, Mr. Tuck is nearer Mr. Den Boer, our Canadian General Secretary, by a good 3,000 miles, than he is to Tyndale House in London. Travelling 200 miles from Shrewsbury to Carlisle to meet Mr. Tuck here in the UK looks insignificant by comparison.

6 Borrowing the queries of airport check-in staff—'Did you pack your own bag' and 'Could anyone else have tampered with it?'

7 You must hear the change of voice!

SABBATH SCHOOL LEARNING PRIZE FUND

"...from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures..."

2 Timothy 3.15

One thing the Trinitarian Bible Society is doing to encourage and enable children in the study of God's Word is the provision of the Sabbath School Learning Prize Fund. This Fund was commenced a number of years ago to encourage the memorizing by children and young people of the Holy Scriptures from the Authorised (King James) Version of the Bible.

Under the scheme, suitably inscribed copies of the Bible are presented to those who have learned by heart selected passages of the Word of God. A gilt-edged, leatherette text Bible is awarded to children aged under ten who have memorized the portions for their age group; a gilt-edged leatherette reference Bible is awarded to young people aged ten to fifteen who have memorized the portions for their age group. Young people aged ten or over who have already received an award Bible in the lower age group may receive the reference Bible on memorizing the selected portions for the higher age group.

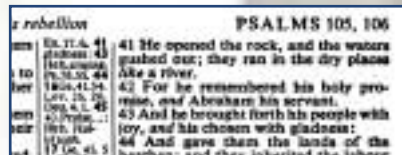
The Society would encourage all parents, office-bearers and others, who seek the spiritual well-being of the young, whether or not the children under their charge attend a Sabbath School, to request further details of the Sabbath School Learning Prize Fund from the Society.

New Pocket Reference Bible

In order to fill a gap in the Society's range of Bibles that has been apparent for some years, we are pleased to announce our new publication of a small pocket reference Bible.

We have produced a low cost flexible vinyl cover edition retailing at £3.95 each (Product Code: 6S). It has a reduced Pitt Minion typeface with bold-figure cross references and a page size of 130 x 90 x 18mm (5¼" x 3½" x ¾"), and is available in two attractive colours: Slate Grey and Burgundy.

This new edition is known to appeal to our overseas customers but we are expecting wide sales, too, from the home markets of all of our Branches. In view of its likely popularity in a missionary and evangelistic context, we have kept



the price as low as possible. It is therefore suitable for introducing the Scriptures to unbelievers in our communities, complementing our existing Royal Ruby standard text (without references) Bible (Product Code: 31S).

To encourage our supporters to give this new edition freely in the community and for outreach abroad, a good missionary discount is available to those engaged in the Free Distribution of the Scriptures; we also propose offering a further discount of 5% for a box of 40 or more.

We hope this new Bible will have good sales and be a blessing to our supporters and customers at home and abroad to the glory and praise of God.

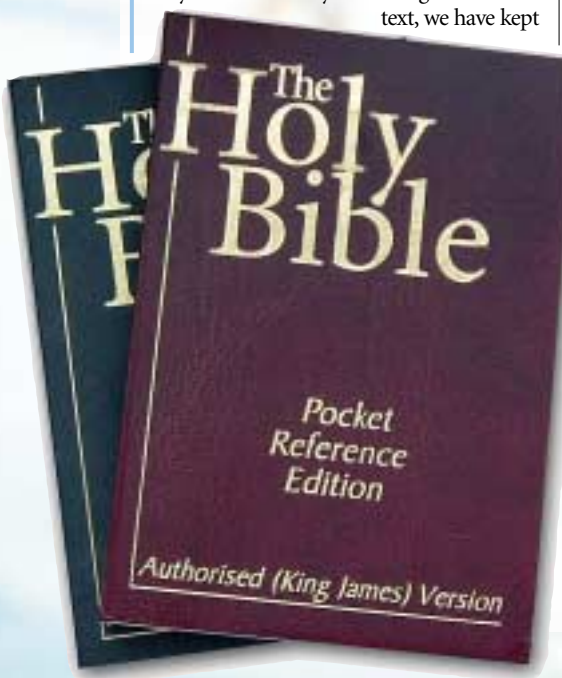
The new Bible is available now and will be fully illustrated in our forthcoming colour catalogue for 2005. When ordering please quote your Account number if available together with the Product Code: 6S or ISBNs: 1862281351 Slate Grey & 186228136X Burgundy.

Price £3.95 less any missionary and/or box discount.



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THE WORD OF GOD



AMONG ALL NATIONS

Europe

From a UK mission to Ukraine

In 1991 we sent Bibles and other books to an address in Ukraine and started to correspond fairly regularly with the family.



"Welcome to Kutopiugan!"

In 1995 they mentioned that the father of the family had gone to visit his parents who were missionaries in the far north of Russia. I found this fascinating and asked for their address and we sent various books in Russian and started to send TBS calendars every year. The first few years we sent twenty calendars each year; we had a letter in 1996 and 1997 but gathered it was very difficult for them to send letters. As we hadn't heard anything since 1997 the last few years we just sent five Words of Life and five Golden Thoughts

Calendars annually, hoping they were arriving at their destination. Then in December 2003 I received a letter and a photograph. We sent fifteen Words of Life and five Golden Thoughts Calendars straight away and had another letter in February. The last letter says thank you for the beautiful calendars, they have all been distributed and we would like to receive more and if possible tracts. TBS kindly gave us more calendars and we have now sent a total of five Golden Thoughts and seventy-one Words of Life. We're hoping to send books soon and also booklets from TBS.

From Vilnius, Lithuania

Thank you very much for sending us Russian Bibles. We enclose an invitation to our evangelical meetings. They will be held in Vilnius and Ukmerge. The message of the meetings is 'How I can be reconciled with God through Jesus Christ'. In the

An invitation to evangelical meetings in Lithuania



left corner of the invitation we say that everyone who comes to this meeting will get a free Lithuanian or Russian Bible. Thank you for being a part of this ministry. Please pray for God to soften people's hearts and for His power in winning souls for Christ!

From Odessa, Ukraine

The Odessa congregation received from the Trinitarian Bible Society by mail ten thousand copies of calendars Words of Life in Russian. For Christians in Ukraine your calendars are a great joy. We distributed calendars among the Ukrainian churches of different denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Orthodox and Charismatic churches who with gratitude have accepted the gift. Some of the calendars were distributed in the Korean Cultural Centre, in the Corps of Salvation Army, the City Council and the children's hospital as well as in the streets. We have received many thanksgiving letters. One said: I want to tell a short story about a calendar. The Bible now is in the possession of many people, but not all read it. Last year, I gave the calendar to my colleague, a former wicked Communist. He read the quotation on the calendar, then searched and read this verse in the Bible. Many places from the Bible are not clear to him while also he constantly asks me spiritual questions.

From Bârlad, Romania

We celebrate the occasion of the anniversary memory of the birth Lord Jesus in Bethlehem, God bless you with physique and spiritual health in the work of God. Receive our all affection in Jesus Christ and our good wishes for New Year. We thank you the seven hundred calendars and we have distribute for free. We send you a picture when we distributed calendars. Our church salute you with Psalm 100.



Calendar distribution in Romania

From Kolobrzeg, Poland

It was a nice surprise to receive your gifts to our congregation. We want to confirm that we received from you two boxes of calendars. They are beautiful and very useful for the people in our country. In February we are going to meet with other leader churches in our district and I want to share with them also this calendar. Thank you very much for your care to us and we wish you God bless for your work in the future in the kingdom of God.

From Freshwater, Isle of Wight, England

I must send thanks again for your most generous gift of the calendars. They are widely distributed here to church members and at Sisterhood meetings. At Christmas and New Years they are given out at the door to holiday visitors and to local people outside the church. They go into many homes where the people are not regulars at church, but I receive many comments from these people who say 'I do like to have your calendars; I read the text every day and think it over while I'm working'. Some I send to mainland friends and a friend I have in Tokyo—a Japanese nurse who is a Christian—is delighted to have it now. She had never seen it before.

From Penicuik, Mid-Lothian, Scotland

Thanks so much for the Bibles for our mission to Africa. Rev. M— visited from Bassa where people are beginning to return to their homeland and Bibles will be accepted with joy—houses have been demolished and church buildings and also farms taken over by Fulani Nomadic tribesmen. Much prayer is needed.

From Cheshunt, Herts., England

Greetings in the lovely Name of our Lord and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. We do trust you are well and knowing much of the Lord and His goodness, both personally and within the Society. The time has come round again, to request we be considered for a grant of Bibles for this year. We are very grateful for the Society's kindness in previous years and would not presume upon their generosity. If possible, we could use twenty Emerald Bibles, with red and blue hardback covers. As formerly, we shall be holding a number of missions and holiday Bible clubs where we shall use the Bibles as prizes and also hand out copies of the Scriptures to pupils at schools in the area. For your interest, I would say that a few of the young people who received the Bibles have asked for more information on Christian matters, one or two have joined the postal Bible school and one parent has herself requested a Bible. Please pray with us, that these and other contacts will come to know the Saviour.

From Buckie, Aberdeenshire, Scotland

The Colportage Society of Scotland received the Bibles which were provided by the TBS. In the photograph the 70a Giant Print Bibles are being given to a lady in a residential home in Buckie. A year previous, her neighbour, standing in the blue cardigan, was given a set and they have sent a donation for the work of the TBS.

From Achnasheen, Ross-shire, Scotland

I am sorry for the delay to acknowledge the receipt of the fifty-six Ukrainian Bibles. I have been abroad for two months and have fallen behind with correspondence and once again wish to acknowledge the kindness of the person who continues to donate



Giant print Bibles welcome in Scottish residential home

Bibles for Eastern Europe. On this occasion it was Ukrainian Bibles which were donated. It will interest you to know that, of the large number of Bibles received in Odessa from the Trinitarian Bible Society a few years ago, these are distributed except for a small number. The Ukrainian Bible in fact was very well received in central Ukraine especially and there is a continued demand for this translation albeit there are words in it which are not in everyday use. We do very much appreciate the work of the Trinitarian Bible Society for their ongoing interest in supplying this and other translations for Eastern Europe and also those who so liberally contribute the Bibles for our work in these parts. May the Lord be gracious to bless every single copy of His Word to whomever it may happen to come!

From Cookstown, Co. Tyrone, N. Ireland

Thank you very much for supplying us with the Bibles for the Sunday School children who have completed the "Remember



Sabbath School Learning Prize Fund recipients in Northern Ireland

Word of Truth" booklet for the Sabbath School Learning Prize Fund. We were able to present them to the children at our children's day service and I have enclosed a photo of the big event. God bless the TBS.

Africa

From Osu-Accra, Ghana

This is to acknowledge the receipt of the grant of Scriptures. We wish to express our appreciate for what have been allocated to us for sharing and distributing. I wish to confess here that I have done this as demanded and provide here the details of how the Bibles were distributed. I received forty Holy Bibles in Accra Central Post Office. The Post Officers asked to receive some, of which I gave ten to them. Before I gave to them, I notified them whether they already have a Bible. They denied having Bibles at all. So I gave them the Bible to be shared. Twenty Bibles were shared to the people whom I have been sharing the Gospel with. Already I had promised them that I will be receiving Bibles from you and some will be given to them. The remaining ten Bibles I have it in my mind to give to my colleagues who I could notice that they are badly in need of. With your respect, this is how I shared or distributed what was allocated to me. I have many testimonies from people benefited

from this grant, and that they were at the first place to thank the Lord that they are very blessed to be given such. Also this will help them individually to have their private study of the Scriptures. Surprisingly, I have been assured by them of the precaution measures taken to prevent it from being stolen. Since this is my first in sharing this valuable Bible grant to others, I hope to hear encouraging testimonies which same will be communicated to you.

From Serrekunda, The Gambia, W. Africa

Calvary greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thank you very much for the Bibles you sent to me for my church. I got them in good condition and I have distributed them within my congregation. Thank you very much for your love and care that you show to the people of God under my care, may the Lord continue to uphold you and bless you as you serve Him. The Lord has been good to me here and my church here in The Gambia. We are in the midst of strict opposition to the gospel, because Gambia is 95% Islamic with different laws being passed daily to make the preaching of the gospel difficult. But in the midst of this we are seeing more growth. The Lord has helped me, the church has been registered with the government and every year myself and three of my pastors have to take preaching permit. We cannot preach without obtaining this permit; the Lord also helps us to get this year after year. Also the building where we worship also must be approved by the government. The Lord also helps us to get this approval, although it is difficult, but the Lord is helping us. Thank you very much, the Bible has been a blessing to us. Please send us fifty more Bibles and one hundred calendars. We don't get Christian literatures here. If you have Christian literatures, please do sent it.

Although certain phrases and expressions used in these letters may not be doctrinally accurate or in correct English, we reproduce the letters essentially as received, knowing that the Lord is using His Word to the glory of His Name and the furtherance of His Kingdom as the Scriptures are distributed among the nations of the world.



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Tyndale House, London

The front cover shows the International Headquarters of the Trinitarian Bible Society. The building originally constructed in the 1930's has seen considerable change since its purchase in 1996 by the Society, in order to fit it to the task of housing and distributing large quantities of printed material. It also has a very presentable and well tended front garden illustrated above by the roses in full bloom.



Trinitarian Bible Society

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The Aims of the Society

To publish and distribute the Holy Scriptures throughout the world in many languages.

To promote Bible translations which are accurate and trustworthy, conforming to the Hebrew Masoretic Text of the Old Testament, and the Greek Textus Receptus of the New Testament, upon which texts the English Authorised Version is based.

To be instrumental in bringing light and life, through the Gospel of Christ, to those who are lost in sin and in the darkness of false religion and unbelief.

To uphold the doctrines of reformed Christianity, bearing witness to the equal and eternal deity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, One God in three Persons.

To uphold the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

For the Glory of God and the Increase of His Kingdom through the circulation of Protestant or uncorrupted versions of the Word of God.

For introductory literature and price lists please write to the Society at the address given

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