



# Quarterly Record



The Magazine of the Trinitarian Bible Society

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2006





# Trinitarian Bible Society

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

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# Quarterly Record

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Advance Notice

# 175<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

to be held, God willing,

at 1.00pm on Saturday, 23rd September 2006

at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Elephant and Castle, London, SE1

The Rev. David Silversides

Pastor of Loughbrickland Reformed Presbyterian Church  
and member of the General Committee of the Trinitarian Bible Society  
is expected to preach

*Please note:*

*Copies of the Minutes of the Society's Annual General Meeting held on 10th September 2005 have been despatched to Members. Should any other friends/supporters wish to receive a copy, please do not hesitate to contact: Mr. D. Larlham, Assistant General Secretary, Trinitarian Bible Society, Tyndale House, Dorset Road, London, SW19 3NN (d.larlham@trinitarianbiblesociety.org).*

## New Catalogue 2006

The Society's new, fully illustrated catalogue for 2006 is expected to be available early in the new year. Our catalogue covers the full range of the Society's publications. A new catalogue will be sent to all our supporters, trade customers and missionary groups **who have placed orders** with us in the past few years and a specific request for a catalogue should not be necessary.

Our new Classic and Pocket Reference Bibles are detailed, along with our recent edition of the Gospel of Luke and our new English Scripture Theme Tracts, in addition to our other English and foreign language publications.

### The New Catalogue includes:

- A Special Offers Page and New Product News
- English Bibles—Standard Text Bibles, Centre Reference and Concord editions; large print Bibles; New Testaments and Gospels
- Other English Scripture Items—Diary & calendars; greetings cards, bookmarks and other cards; posters; colouring books; tracts and other publications
- Foreign Language Publications
- List of our articles in support of the Authorised Version and its underlying texts
- Sales Terms & Conditions and the Definition of Terms used throughout the catalogue

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# From the Assistant General Secretary

# The Gift of Scripture

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me...

## I have given them thy word

*John 17.8,14*

At the time of writing this (November 2005), two items have come to our attention under the title 'The Gift of Scripture'. The first is a booklet, termed a 'teaching document', published by the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference in England, Wales and Scotland, and the second an edition of the New Testament published by the International Bible Society.

## The first 'Gift of Scripture'

Forty years ago the Roman Catholic Church published *Dei Verbum* (the Word of God), the Second Vatican Council document explaining the place of Scripture in revelation. To celebrate the anniversary of this document, the church has issued 'The Gift of Scripture'. 'What the Catholic Church has to say about the Holy Scriptures builds on ancient insights as well as utilising modern understandings. This document is offered to Catholics, to other Christians, and to all who value the "gift of scripture", so that we may be more richly nourished at "the table of God's word"'.<sup>1</sup>

Alas, the title 'The Gift of Scripture' is a misnomer; far from extolling the merits of the Bible, the booklet makes it very clear that Scripture cannot be wholly relied upon. 'We should not expect to find in Scripture full scientific accuracy or complete historical precision',<sup>2</sup> we read therein. Worse is to follow: the first eleven chapters of Genesis are among the passages about which the Roman Catholic bishops assure us that 'the material found in these chapters could not simply be described as historical writing.

Though they may contain some historical traces, the primary purpose was to provide religious teaching!<sup>3</sup>

As one might also expect, those parts of Revelation which Reformed Christians have traditionally interpreted to refer to the church of Rome receive short shrift—‘such symbolic language must be respected for what it is, and is not to be interpreted literally. We should not expect to discover in this book details about the end of the world, about how many will be saved and about when the end will come.’<sup>4</sup> Whilst many of our supporters would agree with them about literal interpretations of numbers and dates, the whole thrust of the prophecies concerning the demise of ‘Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth’ in Revelation is thus discounted.

Further, while we are told of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council ‘that the truth of Scripture is to be found in all that is written down “for the sake of our salvation”, we should not expect total accuracy from the Bible in other, secular matters’.<sup>5</sup> In passing, one has to wonder why even the Biblical truth regarding salvation has then required to be utterly distorted and corrupted by various papal pronouncements and traditions down through the centuries, so that the adherent to the apostate system cannot now readily determine the way to eternal life!

The authors of the booklet say that the Bible must be approached in the knowledge that ‘God’s word is expressed in human language’, thereby already giving weight to its human dimensions. Indeed, ‘not to recognise the human features of Scripture would lead us into fundamentalism, which brings a reluctance to ask deeper questions about the text’.<sup>6</sup> The church must therefore present the gospel ‘in ways that are appropriate to changing times, intelligible and attractive to our contemporaries’.<sup>7</sup> ‘Fundamentalism’ is condemned for its ‘intransigent intolerance’, warning readers of ‘significant dangers’ in such an approach, which, *inter alia*, ‘does not allow for the presence of “imperfect and time-conditioned elements” within Scripture’.<sup>8</sup> It appears that any desire to interpret the Bible literally, be it in relation to the Genesis record of Creation, the Fall, Cain and Abel, the Flood and the tower of Babel, or the curse that the Jews brought upon themselves at Calvary (see Matthew 27.25 and Galatians 3.10), is tarred with the brush of ‘fundamentalism’, and is therefore to be avoided.

Such comments are not, of course, surprising to the discerning Protestant believer. Indeed it **would** have been surprising if the leopard of Rome had changed its spots and, after so many centuries of withholding the Holy Scriptures from its people and reluctantly allowing its followers access to the Bible in their own language for a few decades (albeit only to be rightly interpreted by the pope or other officials, down to

the local priest), had suddenly ‘seen the light’ and recommended the whole of God’s Word to Roman Catholics unreservedly!

## The second ‘Gift of Scripture’

The second item using the title ‘the Gift of Scripture’ is detailed on the Web site of the International Bible Society. Here we read of a venture championed by IBS to ‘provide the gift of Scripture to thousands of individuals and families in Colorado Springs and the surrounding area’. In 2004 a publication entitled *Our City, God’s Word*—described as a ‘customized New Testament’—was distributed to 100,000 homes in the locality in the wrappers of the local newspaper *The Gazette*. ‘The distinctive New Testament features local scenes familiar to residents, information about the city, photos of local sites from yesterday and today, and testimonies of Colorado Springs residents.’ Informative notes were inserted into the text to assist people unfamiliar with Scripture, and the newspaper wrapper included ‘spiritual encouragement’ and a Web site address to direct readers to local churches. A local minister said that ‘The people who are distributing the Word of God care enough about the people of the community to personalize it’.<sup>9</sup>

This publication is said to represent ‘the latest in a long line of specialty Scripture materials produced by IBS for use by churches and ministry organizations’ and to be ‘a fantastic outreach tool... by using the people, sights and flavor of Colorado Springs, we believe many will not only discover but engage<sup>[10]</sup> the New Testament’.

What are we to make of these apparently generous ‘Gifts of Scripture’ from the Roman Catholic Church and the International Bible Society? Sadly, we have to conclude that neither of these two ‘gifts’ is what it seems. The one is issued with so many warnings about its shortcomings and firm instructions about what it cannot do that its value is greatly diminished; the other is remodelled to such an extent that its intrinsic worth is unacceptably veiled. Whereas Rome has fatally **detracted** from the ‘gift’ element (how would one feel if a ‘gift’ were hedged about with so many warnings and restrictions that it could hardly be used?), the IBS has **added** unnecessarily to the ‘Scripture’ element, infusing it with so many pointless trappings that it resembles a sword with a man-made plastic blade and various ‘helpful features’ that render it useless!

## What is the true ‘Gift of Scripture’?

By way of contrast, what is the Lord God’s Gift of Scripture? Although that precise expression does not occur in the Authorised Version of the Bible, there is ample evi-

dence that the concept is a Biblical doctrine. Whereas God's 'gifts' that adorn the New Testament range from grace, justification and righteousness to the Holy Ghost, eternal life and the 'unspeakable gift' of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, passages such as that from *John 17* above more than suffice to convince us that He has bestowed freely upon His people the gift of His Word. We see from *Romans 3.2* that the oracles of God were **committed** unto the Jews, and this was their **chief** advantage and profit. By the plain evidence of Christ's words to His Father in His high priestly prayer, we see not only the importance in the Lord's eyes of affording His disciples the same privileges, but we gain a clear insight into the vital principle of conveying **God the Father's words** exactly as they were given to the Son.

In that well-known passage in *2 Timothy 3.16,17*, there is confirmation that Scripture is **given** by God and that it is given to **the man of God**: i.e., not just to the Jews, nor even just to the Lord's disciples, but to every individual comprising the Church universal throughout all ages. Furthermore, that sublime list of profitable uses in those two verses show us that **all** Scripture is immensely to be valued for everything that the believer can need for going on to perfection, and for furnishing him for '**good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them**' (*Ephesians 2.10*).

How aptly then, is God's Word pictured by the manna in the wilderness, for the children of Israel needed nothing more than that and the Lord's provision of water (picturing the Holy Spirit) for their nourishment throughout their lengthy journeyings! How right, too, was Job in saying '**I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food**' (*Job 23.12*)!

It is this Society's humble desire and intention to pass on to the Lord's people and to whoever else will read it the Word of God as faithfully and accurately translated as possible. We will certainly not tell the recipients which parts of it to read, or worse still, which parts cannot be relied upon, for we believe it is all of the utmost value and profit. Also, we will not add to it our own 'notes and comments' as if that will make it more useful or relevant. What a gross insult that would be to the Lord Whose Word it is, and Who will surely accomplish with it that which He pleases, and make it prosper in the thing whereto He sends it!

We draw to a close with a selection of choice quotations from the Rev. Thomas Boston's *The Scriptures: the Book of the Lord, and the Diligent Study and Search Thereof Recommended and Urged*:<sup>11</sup>

The scripture is the best of books. They who heard Christ, said, 'Never man spake like this man;' and they that see the true glory of the scriptures must



own, never did any write like these writings. There we have the true picture of the great Author, in spotless holiness; there the revelation of his mind with respect to our salvation. Whatever other books there be in the world relating to our salvation; they are but dim tapers lighted at this burning lamp...

For if men loved God, they would love his word, Psal. CXIX.97. And men, by their relish of the word, may know what case their souls are in. For according as they relish the scriptures, so is it with their souls. If they have lost the gust of them, it is evident that either they have no grace, or that it is not in exercise...

Let us believe it in all the parts thereof; the commands, that we may study to conform ourselves to them; the promises, that we may thereby be encouraged to a holy life; and the threatenings, that we may thereby be deterred from sin. Alas! though we own it to be the word of God, that we are no more moved with it than if it were the word of man, and such a man as we give little credit to...

There are depths there wherein an elephant may swim, and will exercise the largest capacities, with all the advantages they may be possessed of. God in his holy providence has so ordered it, to stain the pride of all glory; to make his word the liker himself, whom none can search out to perfection, and to sharpen the diligence of his people in their inquiries into it... There are shallow places in these waters of the sanctuary, where lambs may wade...

To read the scriptures just for reading's sake, without labouring to understand what ye read, is very unprofitable work. Nay we should search narrowly till we find the sense and meaning of what we read, as one that digs deep, breaks the clods of earth, till he finds the golden ore...

This is the gate of heaven; and there must be striving to get in at it. It is not easy to overcome a dark, carnal, hard heart, which unfits us for the study of the scriptures. And indeed many get but little advantage by their reading it; for dig they cannot, and beg they will not; and therefore they go empty from these wells of salvation...

Were it put to the choice of the saints, either to put the sun out of the firmament, or the Bible out of the world, they would chuse the former, but never the latter... For that must needs be most excellent that has most of God in it.

As we commence our 175th year of seeking to publish the Word of God, please pray that we may always seek to honour Him in the way we do it, that we will not be

a stumblingblock in the path of any who will read it, and that in passing on the gift of Scripture to as many as we can, in as many tongues as He enables, we may have the joy of seeing many saved and edified thereby, to His eternal glory.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Liturgy Office of England and Wales, *The Gift of Scripture*, <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/liturgy/Resources/Scripture/> (25 November 2005).
- <sup>2</sup> Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland, *The Gift of Scripture* (The Catholic Truth Society, 2005), p. 18.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52, quoted from *General Directory for Catechesis*, p. 50.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20, quoting from *Dei Verbum* 15.
- <sup>9</sup> 'IBS Teams with Local Christian Leaders and Churches to Give the Gift of Scripture', *IBS World News*, [http://www.ibs.org/press\\_release/news.php?news\\_id=33](http://www.ibs.org/press_release/news.php?news_id=33) (9 November 2005).
- <sup>10</sup> It is interesting how this word 'engage' has been coined by the Roman Catholic Bishops, too, who in the introduction to *The Gift of Scripture* (p. 12) supra, say 'We suggest practical ways of enhancing our engagement with the Holy Scriptures'. Is this equating the study of God's Word to a military 'engagement' or a romantic 'engagement' or some other transitory attachment at the whim of man?!
- <sup>11</sup> The following quotations are taken from Thomas Boston, *The Complete Works of Thomas Boston*, 12 vols. (London: William Tegg & Co., 1853), 1.56-76.

## THE TREASURY

We warmly thank the donors of the following anonymous gifts which have been received recently. Belfast £50; Taunton £5; Lurgan £250; Nottingham £10; Inverness £40; Somerset £45; Edinburgh £100; Manchester £21; Culkein Stoer £40; Bournemouth £75; anon via Charities Aid Foundation £600, £128.21; Give as you Earn £105.47, £9.60; United Kingdom Evangelization Trust £299, £50; church donation three of £50; South West Charitable Giving three of £33.69; direct into the bank £100, £50, £43, £30, four of £25; via Speakers £40; cash £140, three of £20, £10; Annual General Meeting collection £233.97; in respect of Open Day £25; other £5, £2.10. **Total £2,918.42.** In addition, we have had two donations of CHF 10,000.00, one for Head Office and the other for TBS New Zealand.

# Improving Our Bibles

In 2005 the General Committee published a statement detailing the Society's position on the Holy Scriptures. Amongst other things this document specified the nature of the Bibles (and other Scriptures) we seek to publish and distribute on behalf of our members and friends. This, of course, has an impact not only on the translation work being undertaken for the future (God willing) but also on some of the translations we currently publish and circulate, specifically the French, the Spanish and the Romanian Bibles. These Bibles may be the best editions available in their languages, but (most regrettably) it has been found they do not come up to the criteria the Society's Constitution requires.

For approximately fifteen years the Society's General Committee has been concerned over the French Bible that the Society has published for over one hundred years. Although the Society's edition of the French Bible by Louis Segond has been corrected a number of times in many of the areas in which it was deficient, it is still not of the overall standard that the Society would wish. At the turn of this century the Society's Spanish Bible was improved in many areas, but again recent investigation has found that there are yet a number of problems that need urgent attention. Most disappointingly, it also has been found that the Society's Romanian Bible, on which work started in the early 1990s, has characteristics that mean that this Bible also falls below the standard the Society is seeking (by God's grace) to maintain.

Accordingly, at the meeting of the Society's General Committee held on the 21st November 2005, it was unanimously resolved to accept the General Secretary's recommendation to withdraw from publication and circulation the French, Spanish and Romanian Bibles, together with all New Testaments and Gospels in those languages, until such time as they had been made to conform to the Society's principles. Whilst the action being taken is most regrettable, it will be appreciated by the Society's members and friends who are supportive of our desire only to publish copies of the Holy Scriptures that are of a high quality, that the Committee had no other option. Preliminary work is already underway to rectify the situation as soon as is practi-



cable, and the fervent prayers of all the Society's supporters are sought that the necessary work may be undertaken without undue delay and that before too long more reliable and faithful editions of the French, Spanish and Romanian Bibles will again be available.

In addition to the many helpful suggestions and proposals we have received from Christians throughout the Hispanic world, two most capable men have in the providence of God offered their services to help oversee the improvements in our Spanish Bible; there is the prospect of French nationals and French speakers in Canada assisting us in preparing an edition of the SPCK from the 1850s or a similarly reliable Bible for publication; and fairly recently, two men and their team of helpers in Romania have not only urged us to have our Romanian Bible conformed more accurately to the best original language texts, but have been most positive in their offers of help one way or another. The provision of these personnel, together with the discovery of editions of the SPCK French Bible that we may be able to use, encourage us to believe that the Lord's mighty hand is fully supporting us in these three most important ventures. It is also heartening to record that the Divine Author of the Holy Scriptures has Himself most graciously provided the financial resources necessary for the Society to go forward as quickly and as prayerfully as methodical attention to detail will allow.

Paul Rowland  
General Secretary

## Deputation Speaker

The Society is still in urgent need of a man to work full-time in sharing the increasing burden of deputation work. First and foremost, the man we seek will be a preacher of the Word, with a recognised gift in that area. He should be able to travel widely and possess a full driving licence. He must be in complete accord with the principles and aims of the Society. The work will include the arranging and taking of as many meetings as is possible to fit in each week.

Please pray for the Lord to bring the right candidate to us. Applicants should contact Mr. David Larlham, Assistant General Secretary, Trinitarian Bible Society, Tyndale House, Dorset Road, London SW19 3NN; e-mail: [d.larlham@trinitarianbiblesociety.org](mailto:d.larlham@trinitarianbiblesociety.org).

# Membership Renewal

Membership subscriptions for 2006 are now due.

Once again we invite friends and supporters of the Society to take this opportunity, if you have not already done so, to affirm or reaffirm your prayerful association with the Society by becoming a Member. This may be done either by completing the enclosed\* form or by completing one online at [www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org](http://www.trinitarianbiblesociety.org) under 'Membership'.

Membership in the Society runs from January to December and is renewable annually. However, applications/renewals received after 1st October are deemed to count for the following calendar year unless the supporter requests otherwise.

Each person desiring membership must complete the Membership Form in full for each year of membership; we have redesigned the form so that husbands and wives may use one form, but both must complete and sign. Online, however, each member must complete the form individually. Many supporters make regular donations by standing order direct into the Society's bank account, and one of these can be counted as a subscription. However, a Membership Form still needs to be completed and we would ask such supporters to make a note on their form that they wish part of their regular standing order to be used for their subscription. A letter of acknowledgement and thanks will be sent once the completed form is received and matched with a standing order payment.

Following our mailing in 2005 to all Life Members, they are reminded that a Membership Form must be completed and signed by them to reaffirm their continuing agreement with the aims and Constitution of the Society. A subscription need not be paid. (Life Membership is no longer available.)

The enclosed Membership Form, if used, may be returned directly to the Society's International Headquarters or to your National Branch Secretary or Local Auxiliary Secretary. Our *Quarterly Record* magazine, which is free upon request, is sent automatically to all of the Society's members.

If any of our friends would like to begin or renew membership but have not received a Membership Form, we would invite you to contact the nearest branch at the address on the inside back cover.

\* The Membership Form was mailed with the October to December 2005 *Quarterly Record* to the great majority of our overseas supporters.

# Reformation by the Word of God

## Nehemiah 8

The Sermon preached at the 174th Annual General Meeting  
10th September 2005  
by Pastor Jack Seaton

I am sure all of us are aware of the fact that the book of Nehemiah more or less divides itself into two parts. In the first seven chapters of the book the main concern is the rebuilding of the wall of the city of Jerusalem that had been broken down during the days of Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon. In the next set of chapters beginning with 8.1, the main theme is the work of reformation and all the various areas of reformation that were to take place within that city at that time. That work of rebuilding the wall of the city was met with a great deal of opposition on the part of the enemies of the children of Israel, but in the goodness and by the grace and mercy of the Lord the people had a heart to work and the work came to be completed in due course. The walls were built, the gates were hung upon their hinges once more and all the necessary personnel were appointed for the good governing of the city. The work was finished and the people would come to rejoice to the praise of the Lord.

Be that as it may, however, Nehemiah's calling under the Lord wasn't simply the rebuilding of the walls of the city of Jerusalem: it was the reforming of the people who were going to live within those walls. In chapter 8, then, the whole business of reformation begins to dominate. Now, you would have to say that the work of reformation had already begun to one degree or another. That fact is very apparent as you begin to look at the people in Jerusalem as they viewed the Word of God in their midst. At the end of the day any true work of reformation is going to be marked by how the people of God view the Word of God amongst them. In chapter 8 you have an outstanding example of that fact. The spirit of reformation was already abroad, and is very evident as you begin to look at the events that now begin to unfold themselves in this part of the book.

So taking up the first eight verses of the chapter to begin with, let me just give you some of the features that marked out that time in Israel, features that must always be present when it comes to determining any true work of reformation amongst the people of God. For the sake of convenience, I'll give you four words that we can pin on our hearts and on our minds. The words are appetite, attitude, attention and action.

## **Appetite** for the Word of God

First of all then, we have what you might call the people's appetite—their appetite for the Word of the Lord in those Old Testament days. The first verse of the chapter reads:

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

They gathered themselves together 'as one man', and as they gathered themselves together as one man it was with one desire in their hearts and minds: that Ezra the servant of the Lord would 'bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel'. Of course, it was not simply that he would bring the book, but that he would read out of the book, preach out of the book and show them the things that God would have them to know out of the book of the Word of the Lord. They wanted to know what the Lord their God had to say to them; and of course they weren't disappointed in any way whatsoever. Verse 8 of the chapter says:

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading.

They came with this desire, with this appetite for the Word of the Living God; they came with one heart and with one mind to the place called the water gate. Now there is no end of application out of those events in the City of Jerusalem at that time. You see from this point onwards that the children of Israel are going to be known as the people of the Book. From this time onwards the Book, the Word of God, was meant to be central in their lives. It was in their adherence to the Word of God that they would show themselves to be Israelites indeed.

That characteristic mark is something that passes over into the New Testament Scriptures of the Word of God to every true redeemed child of the Living God. You remember the Saviour's own words, 'if ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed' (John 8.31). There is nothing that marks out a man or a woman or a

young person as being a child of the Living God more than a readiness and a desire to know what the Word of God says, in order to do what the Word of God says to the praise of the Lord's Name. These words in the first epistle to Peter, chapter 2 verses 1–3, are well known, I'm sure,

Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious.

Now there is more to that perhaps than meets the eye. Peter isn't simply saying that new Christians are to desire the sincere milk of the Word of God, the 'milky things', as it were, of the Word of God; he is saying that all Christians are to have an appetite for the Word of the Living God all the days of their lives. There is a process in the Epistle to the Hebrews in which the writer speaks about laying aside milky things and progressing onto strong meat; but that is not what Peter is speaking about when he speaks about the sincere 'milk of the word'. What he is speaking about is the milk of the 'mother'—the Word—that gave us spiritual birth in the first place. That is the point; as he says in the previous chapter, we are 'being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever' (chapter 1 verse 23).

If we have spiritual life this day, we were given spiritual birth by the Word of God. This is by the Spirit of God, of course, but you can't separate the Word of God from the Spirit of God. What the Apostle is saying is this: that the Word of God is your mother in the faith. And as a child, a newborn babe, desires the milk of its mother's breast, so every born-again believer in Christ does exactly the same thing. That hunger is to characterise us every day that we live. How do you know a living baby? It cries for its mother's milk. How do you know a living soul? It does exactly the same thing.

These old Israelites had that desire, that appetite for the Word, the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. It's an ill omen for the new Israel—the Church of the Living God—if we don't have the same kind of appetite for the Word of God that the old Israelites were showing in Nehemiah 8. So it is this appetite that is to be sought when we begin to determine what is, or what is not, a work of reformation—or revival or refreshing, or whatever you might want to call it.

It is not only in Nehemiah 8 that you have this selfsame kind of thing; you have it throughout the Word of God, in the Old Testament and New Testament alike. It is always a good practice to see parallel, equivalent passages in the two Testaments. We have a great need in our day for people to grasp the totality of the Word of God from beginning to end.



Let me give you one New Testament passage that ‘echoes’ these events of Nehemiah chapter 8. It is in Acts 10, when Peter had been sent for by the Roman centurion Cornelius, to come and preach the gospel to those that would gather in his home—what was the beginning of the work of the gospel among the Gentiles in a very real way. After a bit of rebuke and a bit of persuasion from God, Peter finally got up and went to the house of Cornelius. When he got there, all the household and others had gathered together, and Cornelius related how he came to send for Peter in the first place. Then he said this: ‘Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God’ (verse 33). What an invitation! Many a pastor or preacher would envy that kind of congregation when they come into the pulpit on a Lord’s Day morning or evening.

In this passage in Acts, the people were waiting to hear the Word. ‘Speak on Peter’: that is what they were saying. ‘We are here to hear what God has to say to us through you.’ Peter does that very thing and he ‘speaks on’: he speaks the Word of God to those hungry hearts that had gathered in Cornelius’s home. You see the scenes and the truth behind the scenes. In the Old Testament and New Testament alike, they are scenes of desire, of appetite: desire for the sincere milk of the Word that we might grow thereby, desire for the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded Israel. The people want to know how they might order their lives to the glory of God out of the Word of the Living God.

That’s what we see in those glimmerings of reformation in Israel in those old days. It is something that must characterise any true work of reformation: personally in our own souls, corporately in the churches of Christ. You know the words of David I’m sure well enough; ‘More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold’ (Psalm 19.10). These people come with an appetite for the Word of the Living God. Note that as one of the things that marked out that day in the city of Jerusalem: there was an appetite for the Word of God.

Then there are two other things that we are told about the people who had now rebuilt the wall of the city: their attitude towards the Word that they asked to be presented to them and their attentiveness on that same Word. Both are absolutely essential for all that lies before them.

## **Attitude** towards the Word of God

With regards to their attitude, not for one minute did those people ever consider that this Word that was going to be read in their presence was anything other than the

Word of the Living God indeed. Look again at their request in Nehemiah 8.1, ‘And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel’.

It was the book of the law of Moses, but more importantly it was the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. The people didn’t have any difficulties in their hearts and minds in discerning between human instruments and divine instrumentality. They knew it was Moses that had given them the Law, but also that God had given Moses the Law in the first place. It was God’s Word, the Word which the Lord had commanded to Israel.

It was absolutely crucial that they start out with that attitude, and adopt that attitude, right at the outset of this work of reformation. As we’ll see in a minute, when they begin to delve into that Word they are going to come upon a couple of surprises. They are going to have to be persuaded that it is the Word of the Living God. It’s a wee bit like that time when the mother of Zebedee’s children made the request before the Saviour that her two sons might sit one on the right hand and the other on the left in His Kingdom (Matthew 20). But Jesus answered, ‘Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?’ (verse 22).

‘Ye know not what ye ask.’ There are times when we ask the Lord to open up the Word to us, but we know not what we ask, and we have to be prepared for what the Lord begins to tell us out of that Word. If we entertain any thoughts that it is anything other than the Word of the Living God then we are only going to obey those parts of the Word that serve our purpose or that suit our thoughts. However, if we have the conviction within our hearts and our souls that this is nothing other than the Word of the Lord God of heaven and earth, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, then that will give us the motivation necessary to do whatever it is that the Lord commands us to do. This is the Word of God, it’s the Book of the Law of Moses which the Lord had commanded to Israel. The people of Israel were off to a good start with that attitude that they had stored up in their hearts and souls.

We all know that sometimes the precepts of the Word are difficult, but if we are able to follow those precepts they are going to be a blessing. That lovely old hymn says ‘The Lord is King! who then shall dare/ Resist His will, distrust His care,/ Or murmur at His wise decrees/ or doubt his royal promises?’<sup>1</sup> Whether they be precepts or promises, if we have settled that this is nothing other than the Word of God, if that is the attitude of our hearts and our souls, then we will enjoy the promises and we

will undertake the precepts. It was so essential that this fact be established right at the commencement of this work when God was going to reform that people.

## **Attentiveness** to the Word of God

Then, of course, it is that attitude—that this is indeed the Word of God—that accounts for their attentiveness, their attention, being paid to the Word. In verses 2 and 3 we read that ‘Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law’. That doesn’t need any enlargement for any of us. The very essence of reformation in a soul is that that soul is attentive to the Word of the Living God. Very simply, the Word comes to be pronounced in their hearing and they incline their ears, or are going to incline their ears to that Word. It is reciprocation. It is always the preaching of the Word of God or the reading of the Word of God on the one hand and the hearing and attentiveness to the Word of God on the other.

You will probably know that there are what you might call two famines mentioned in the Scriptures. One of them has to do with the preaching of the Word of God and the other one has to do with the hearing of the Word of God. In 1 Samuel, when Samuel was still only a young boy, the state of things in Israel had come to a very low ebb, and it says that ‘the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was no open vision*’ (3.1). It doesn’t mean that the Word was precious in the sense that it was valuable. It was precious in the sense that it was rare. You hardly ever came across the true preaching of the Word; there was no open vision; there was no open declaration of the Word of the Living God. There was a famine of the preaching of the Word.

In the book of Amos we read about the famine of the hearing of the Word of God. ‘Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD’ (8.11). Sometimes you can have the one, sometimes you can have the other. Sometimes it is the lack of preaching that is uppermost, sometimes it is the lack of true hearing that is uppermost. But in Nehemiah’s time in Israel neither was the case: there was both an endeavour to preach the Word of God and a willingness to hear the Word of God. That combination is of the very essence of any true reforming work in the people of God.

The word ‘attentive’ comes in verse 3 of Nehemiah 8, and literally means that their ears were inclined towards the Word. There is a sense in which God’s ear is attentive to us. ‘I waited for the Lord my God,/ and patiently did bear;/ At length to me he did incline/ my voice and cry to hear’.<sup>2</sup> The implication is absolutely clear: if God directs His ear to hear what we have to say, surely we have to direct our ears to hear what God has to say. We are always under obligation to be attentive to the Word of the Living God.

You know how it is with our children sometimes? You want to speak to them sincerely, you want to give them some good piece of advice or some good directive. But one of the great barriers is not being able to get their ear, not being able to get their attention. Are you listening to me? Are you listening to me? How often does the Lord our God have to say to each and every one of us, ‘Are you listening to Me? Are you listening to Me?’

In that ongoing work that had now begun in Jerusalem, one of the features was their attention, their attentiveness. Their ears were towards the Word that they desired to be brought to them.

That great exponent of the human heart, John Bunyan, has got it just right when it comes to the business of the ear. If you have ever read *The Holy War*, you’ll know that the book is about the city of Mansoul. Mansoul was once ruled over by the great King El Shaddai, but then along came the evil prince Diabolus, the devil, and took control of Mansoul. But then there came a point when El Shaddai was going to bring his Mansoul back once again and so he sent Prince Emmanuel, His Son. The first place that Prince Emmanuel began to launch His attack was at one of the gates of the city called Eargate. As that assault began, Diabolus, the devil, had already taken precautions with regard to Eargate because, as Bunyan says, it was at that gate that he himself first made an entrance into the city. ‘Yea, hath God said...? Ye shall not surely die’ (Genesis 3.1, 4).

I heard recently about a preacher over in Northern Ireland who announced that ‘tonight I am going to bring you a word from the devil. And the word from the devil is this. Ye shall not surely die’. That is the devil’s text, and there right at the beginning, in John Bunyan’s words, it was through Eargate that the devil made his entrance into Mansoul. There were precautions; it says the gate was to have double guards, double bolts and double locks and bars. Then comes the masterstroke. The keeper of Eargate was an old gentleman called Mr. Prejudice and he had sixty deaf men who were to do his bidding. That is a good picture of the ear: double guards, double bolts, and double locks and bars. Old Mr. Prejudice and his sixty deaf men under him were the keepers of the gate.

That is what the ear is like by nature. But again, we can be thankful that at this point in Israel's reformation that was beginning to take place, that wasn't the case. When they gathered themselves together as one man to hear the Word of the Lord, they were attentive unto the Word of the Lord. You see, it all hangs together: their appetite for the Word was healthy, their attitude to the Word was right, and so their attentiveness on the Word was absolutely assured.

## **Action** on the Word of God

Then comes the action. You have appetite, attitude, attentiveness and then you have action in verses 5 and 6 of the chapter. 'And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: and Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.'

It's not hard to visualise these scenes. Ezra opens up the Book, stands above the people, blesses the people and the great God. And all the people answer, Amen, Amen. They lifted up their hands, and they bowed their heads, and they worshipped the Lord their God. 'Stand up, and bless the Lord,/ Ye people of His choice'.<sup>3</sup> That's the kind of thing that was happening at that time. They stand up and then they bow down. There is no contradiction in that. You see, we stand up in the presence of the Word of God and we bow down in the presence of the Word of God. It's that which we seek for our blessing and it's that which we submit to, to the praise and honour of the Lord. Ezra blessed all the people and blessed the God of that Word, and they responded with their Amen, Amen.

Somebody has drawn a good contrast between the dedication of the temple in the days of Solomon. There, there were trumpeters and cymbals and glory and beauty, natural and supernatural, to overwhelm the worshippers. Here with Ezra, however, all you had was a man standing on a wooden pulpit with a Book in his hand. But it was the Book of God. That was the whole point. When the Book of God was brought into the midst of the people they reacted in the way that was befitting to having the Book of God in their midst.

The word 'amen' either gives weight to what is being said, or is a response to what has been said. It is as when the Saviour said 'verily, verily': amen, amen, so be it; or when we are responding and saying in our hearts and souls, 'so be it' to all the promises of God in Christ. It's a great word. It is as the Psalmist David by the Holy Spirit of

God brings the first part of the Book of Psalms to a conclusion with that lovely 72nd Psalm, 'And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and Amen' (verse 19). 'So be it!' We also see it when Paul prays in Ephesians 3, 'Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen' (verses 20, 21).

These people standing beside the water gate want to hear the Word of the Lord. They have got an **appetite** for it, and an **attitude** towards it, that it is the Word of the Living God. No wonder then that they are **attentive** to it and **act** toward it as they ought. When men and women begin to respond like that to the Word of God, you can fairly say there is a work of reformation afoot in that person or people.

## **'Touching and Glancing'** on the Word of God: the first day

Now that was only the 'first day'; that was just the beginnings of the first day. You follow on into the chapters and you get the next day, and the day after, and so on right through this part of the Book of Nehemiah. It's a work of reformation that is going on. Let me just give you at least a few glimmerings or a few gleanings (as Isaac Watts would talk about 'touching and glancing', so we just touch and glance on some of the things that now follow on).

That first day concluded with the celebration of one of Israel's great feasts, the feast of trumpets; and in the feast of trumpets you have the real beginnings of Israel's determination to walk in the light of the Word. They did not just desire to hear it, but to walk in the light of it. If you look in verses 9 and 10, 'And Nehemiah, which *is* the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day *is* holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this day is* holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength'.

Now there are awfully strong implications in that. The people, in that sense, have been hewn asunder by the Word of the Lord because the Word of the Lord very often does that to us, especially when the Lord is working a work of reforming grace. All the

people wept, it says, when they heard the words of the Law. But in step Nehemiah, Ezra and the others and they tell them not to weep but in essence to ‘eat and drink and be merry’. Now, why were they told to do that? It was because the Word of God required them to do that. It was the feast of trumpets, and the feast of trumpets was to be marked out by rejoicing in the nation of Israel: they were to be rejoicing and giving thanks to the Lord God of heaven and earth. You see the implications and the ongoing application of that! Those people at that point didn’t really feel much like rejoicing. But their feelings had to become subservient to the Word of God. This is the feast of trumpets. It’s a holy day. On this holy day you are not to mourn and you are not to weep. You are to rejoice. But I feel like weeping. It doesn’t matter. You are to rejoice.

When the Word of God comes, very often in a very striking way it has to overrule our feelings. When the Word of God is able to overrule our feelings, the work of reformation is going on in our souls. ‘Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice’ (Philippians 4.4). The circumstances might be pretty grim, and you may say ‘I can’t rejoice in these circumstances’; but you rejoice in the Lord in the midst of the circumstances. We are not asked to rejoice in the circumstances, but to rejoice in the Lord in the midst of them. Dear Mr. Spurgeon in his own usual way, when he comments on those words of the Apostle, says, ‘I never yet read a portion of Scripture that says, groan in the Lord always, and again I say groan’.<sup>4</sup> These people are to do what the Word of God tells them to do; and they do it.

But of course there is a great rationale behind their being called to do that very thing: verse 10, ‘Then he said. . . Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this day is holy* unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength’. There’s nothing that will help us to press on at difficult times like the joy of the Lord in our hearts. When God commands us to do something, whatever it is, it is ultimately for our spiritual good. So ends the first day. They have only begun. But in the very beginnings, surely there are all the true marks of reforming grace.

## **‘Touching and Glancing’ on the Word of God: the next days**

Now again just to touch a wee bit more, when we come to the second day and the third day and the fourth day, it’s more of the same. In verse 13 we read, ‘And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the

priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law'. That's a tremendous word for any believer, but especially for anyone who is engaged in the ministry of the Word of God or the preaching of the Word of God to others. You see, here were these men. They had just spent the whole of that previous day opening up and declaring and reading and preaching the Word of God. So they must know it all. No they don't! And on the second day they are back to the Word of God to understand the Word of God, and not just for themselves, of course. They want to investigate the Word of God for themselves but also for the good of others as well.

The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word. When we think we know it all, we only show how little we really know. There are those things we know, and we must know them unto everlasting life: but to adopt the attitude that 'I don't need to investigate this Word further'—that's spiritual death creeping into the soul.

In the text of the Authorised Version that I'm using, it says they 'were gathered together... even to understand the words of the law' (verse 13). But there's a reading in the margin. It says, 'to understand...: or, *that they might instruct in the words of the law*'. So in fact if you put the two things together you probably get the fulness of why those leaders had met together on the second day. It was in order to understand the Word of God for themselves in order that they might instruct others in that Word also. It wasn't an academic pursuit. It was study with purpose.

You may know what is said about Ezra in the book of Ezra: 'For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments' (Ezra 7.10). That was their intention. They were investigating the Word so that they might instruct others in the Word so that together they might implement the Word. This is proof perfect that it was a reforming spirit that was abroad at that time.

When they begin to investigate the Word, they are in for a great surprise. The great surprise is this: they were to celebrate the feast of tabernacles or the feast of booths by dwelling in booths; for years and years they had been observing the feast of booths but without any booths. An amazing thing: nobody had ever stopped and said, 'why do we call this the feast of booths? Why do we call it the feast of tabernacles?' For years, since the days of Joshua (as it says in verse 17), they hadn't built any booths at the feast of booths. The feast was to remember how their fathers had wandered in the wilderness for all of those years and had never built houses, but had lived in booths. Every year at the feast of tabernacles, they were to go and break down branches and



bring them, and build tabernacles or booths of the branches to remember how their fathers had wandered in the wilderness and how God had sustained them and brought them into the land of Canaan. But here was the feast of booths and they hadn't built any booths. If you want an equivalent for us today, if you want to transfer it into Christianity, it's like having the breaking of bread without any bread!

But to their credit, once they began to see that they were lacking in that part of the Word of God, they began to put it right. That's reformation. And let me say, my dear friends, that's a word that each and every one of us needs to understand with regards to true reformation. Reformation isn't simply something that is historical or historic. It's something that's biblical from beginning to end. Where anything clashes with the Word of God and we are shown where we miss the mark with regards to the Word of God, we'd better put it right if we want to enjoy a time of reformation in our souls.

## **Conclusion** to this study of the Word of God

So they come with an appetite, they come with an attitude, they are attentive, they act aright, they investigate, they implement: that's reform. As we look around us with regards to so many things, and with regards to so many claims in our day, especially with regards to the work of reformation or refreshing or revival or whatever you might call it, we simply assess any claim along those lines by asking: How central is the Word of God in that work? Is it precious in the sight of God's people? Is it sought after? Is it believed in? Is it performed regardless of anything else? When all of that is in the work, then God is in the work. By the grace of God and His enabling, may each and every one of us be determined to seek after the Lord our God! He has shown Himself in His Word, and has shown us what He requires from us. By His grace, may we endeavour to do all of that! Amen.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> J. Conder, 'The Lord is King, lift up thy voice', verse 2, *Gospel Hymns* no. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 40.1, *The Psalms of David in Metre* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery, 'Stand Up, and Bless the Lord', *Golden Bells* no. 713 (London: C.S.S.M., n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Spurgeon, 'A Harp of Ten Strings',  
[www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons37.xxxviii.html](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/spurgeon/sermons37.xxxviii.html), (17 Nov. 2005).

# The Road to the AV:

a survey of the New Testament<sup>1</sup> from the Apostle Paul to Miles Smith

by C. P. Hallihan



## Part I

From

## Manuscript to Print

### With mine own hand

Paul's letter to the Galatians is probably one of the earlier pieces of New Testament writing. In chapter 6 verse 11 he declares 'Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand'.<sup>2</sup> This reminds us of a basic fact to do with the unfolding history of the New Testament, a point so obvious that we easily forget it. For three-quarters of the time that the New Testament has existed it has only done so in copies made by hand, truly 'manu-scripts', two Latin words meaning hand-written.<sup>3</sup>

Palestine in Apostolic times was under Roman rule, but for about three hundred years before that it had been under the cultural dominion of Greece. Greek was the everyday language throughout the whole Mediterranean region, acceptable even in Rome. This was the language of 'the fulness of the times', and was the instrument used, under the Sovereign Spirit of God, for that written record which is the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Very quickly the burden of copying and translating these Scriptures was taken up by the churches. The practicalities of accurately multiplying and disseminating the written Word of God start us on the path to the present printed editions of our English Authorised Version.

### Rolls and Papyrus

In New Testament times the Greeks and Romans used papyrus rolls for writing. Papyrus is the fibrous pith of a



### *The Papyrus Plant*

water plant once plentiful in the Nile, but scarcely found there now. Two layers of fibres laid at right angles to each other, soaked, squeezed and glued, formed sheets of a material that could receive marks. The side with horizontal fibres was intended for writing (the 'Recto') but it was quite possible to use the reverse (the 'Verso'). Best quality sheets were those using the largest fibres, and such sheets were joined side-by-side to make rolls of any length. The longest roll known is 133 feet (40.5m), but the average length of Greek literary rolls was 35 feet (10m). Height was variable, the usual being 10 inches (254mm) although 19 inches (482mm) was not unknown, and there were 'pocket' scrolls of only 5 inches (127mm). On such papyrus rolls the writing was most

often in columns 2½–3 inches (63.5–76mm) wide. There were margins between columns and at the top and bottom for annotations and the insertion of corrections, etc. Ordinarily, rolls were written only on one side but if material was scarce or there was a lot to be said, they could be written 'within and without' (Ezekiel 2.10) or 'within and on the backside' (Revelation 5.1). Sometimes the verso of an existing work was used for more writing—one early 4th century manuscript of Hebrews (P13) is on the back of a 3rd-century condensed edition of the Epitome of Livy.

Taking average figures as a guide, we can visualize the autographs of the New Testament books (that is, the first written forms made by John, Luke, etc.) being written in this manner. An epistle such as 2 Thessalonians would be contained on a 15-inch roll of five columns only. Romans would need 11½ feet, Revelation 15 feet, Mark 19 feet, Luke 32 feet! So long as the papyrus roll was the medium of literature, the various copies of the books of the New Testament almost certainly circulated separately. Each book has its own 'history'. Indeed, until the use of the printing press in the 15th century very few Christian communities, and even fewer individuals, possessed all the canonical books.

Imagine the difficulties of using scrolls. I can quote Revelation 5.1 and expect you easily to verify this reference in a Bible—but what if you had a

collection of scrolls to sort out, and no pages to turn or verse and chapter numbers! Remember, there are no ‘reader aids’ or ‘editorial input’—No separation of words punctuation minimal later corrections at top and bottom scarcely any capitals or paragraphs and no chapter or verse numbers and the lines don’t always run the same way. How difficult to find the exact verse—perhaps we should excuse those early Christian writers who quote ‘freely’ and sometimes quote the same verse slightly differently, or just say ‘somewhere in Luke’.

### ■ *Codices and Vellum*

Christians were particularly concerned to improve on this. As early as the 2nd century AD ‘codex’ experiments were tried. A papyrus codex is made up of sheets of papyrus folded once into a ‘quire’ or gathering, like a gigantic scrap-book. It is in fact the basis of the book as we have it today, and it was the desire of the churches for ‘user friendly’ and portable Scriptures that helped establish this now universal system of book construction. Truly, in the providence of our mighty God the full record of His Word deserves even in this small but significant point to be called *The Book*. Quires were fastened by threads through the inner margin, like a modern stapling process, and sometimes monstrous fifty-sheet folds were used in a single cumbersome quire. One famous papyrus codex referred to in the cataloguing system for these documents as P46, called Chester Beatty II, was

once a single quire codex of 104 leaves—only 86 are known to exist now.

A more usual format was quires of 8–12 leaves, joined as needful. The main advantage of this was that more material could be contained, and more easily consulted, without the volume becoming unmanageable. P46, referred to above, originally contained all the Pauline epistles except Timothy and Titus. As a scroll this would have needed one



Princeton University Library

*Part of the Epistle of James on Papyrus<sup>4</sup>*

of 60 feet—or at least two 30-footers. The five separate scrolls needed for the Gospels and Acts are replaced in the 3rd century by one codex, P45 (Chester Beatty I).

Another step in the external form of New Testament material came with the establishment of Christianity under the reign of Emperor Constantine, in the 4th century. The status of the Christian documents changed abruptly, and the wholesale destruction of books that had accompanied earlier persecutions ceased (for a while). Demand began to grow instead throughout the empire as Christianity became respectable. Just at this point the book makers re-

introduced vellum as the writing material. It had been in use for some time in Pergamum from about 190 BC, but never on a large scale (and it is a form of the name of that town which gives us the name ‘parchment’ for vellum).

Vellum is made from the skins of cattle, sheep and goats, especially young ones. The hair is scraped off, the skins washed, rubbed with pumice, and dressed with chalk, giving an almost white sheet, durable and easy to write on in black or certain other colours. Once Christianity became an imperial religion, the physical appearance of the books took on an importance that had not been

*Title page of Matthew's Gospel on vellum from the Lindisfarne Gospels<sup>5</sup>*



there before, and some of the vellum codices of Scripture are extremely beautiful things to look at, though not necessarily reliable or accurate because of that! For completeness I note that ‘paper’, a Chinese cloth-based refinement of the papyrus writing material, did appear in the West in the 12th century, but from the 4th–15th centuries vellum was the preferred material.

### ■ *Translations*

Scripture, existing in three languages, and offering translations within itself, (Matthew 1.23; Mark 5.41, 15.22, 34; John 1.38, 41, 42, 9.7; Acts 4.36, 9.36, 13.8) is inherently translatable, and response to the need for Scriptures in the vernacular, or common language of a people, is as old as the New Testament. Early translations of the New Testament from Greek into Latin began about 180 AD, and both Old and New Testaments were in fact translated from Greek (the Old Testament from the Septuagint). The early translation of the Old and New Testaments into Latin is referred to as the ‘Old Latin’. Around 300 AD there was a translation of the New Testament into Syriac, the ‘Old Syriac’, and also four Coptic Versions, the language spoken in four dialects in Egypt. Other early translations of the Scriptures were in Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic, Slavic, and Gothic.

The most significant and influential translation was in 380 AD, when Jerome translated anew into Latin the Old

Testament from Hebrew and the New Testament from Greek. This return to Hebrew rather than Greek as the proper source for Old Testament translation, although beyond doubt the correct procedure, was strongly resisted and resented at the time. However, this Latin version, styled the ‘Vulgate’ because it was the vulgar, or common, language, became the Bible of the Western Church until the Protestant Reformation in the 1500s. Apart from the long, slow adulteration of the Vulgate text over 1000 years,<sup>6</sup> it generated problems of translation all through that time. From Augustine to Erasmus, Bible translation never escaped the incubus of Latin as the source text. This historical period, in very general terms, is that of the Byzantine Empire, centred in Byzantium (subsequently Constantinople, now Istanbul). Most Greek scholarship and literature, including many Biblical texts, were drawn there, and thus for a time lost to the Western world.

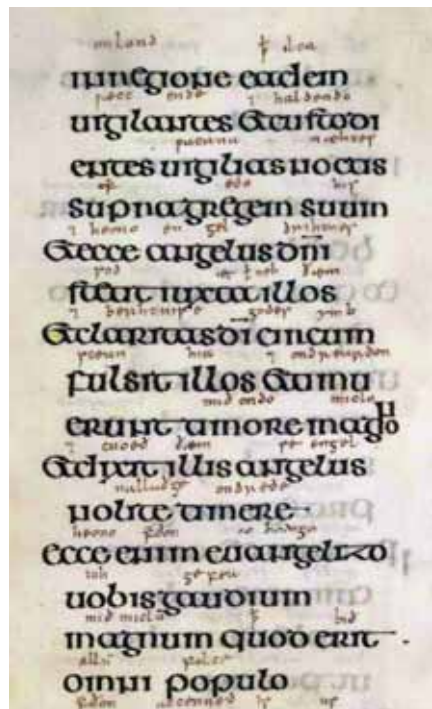
### ■ *English Scriptures: Caedmon to Wycliffe*

There were yearnings and strivings toward the provision of English-language Scripture all through the so-called Dark Ages, as the following brief list indicates:

- 440 Roman legions withdraw from Britain.
- 670 Caedmon composes poems in Old English derived from the Biblical narratives.

- 825 *Vespasian Psalter*—interlinear Old English translation of the earlier Latin text.
- 900 *Paris Psalter*—Old English version of the first fifty Psalms.
- 950 Aldred writes Old English between the lines of the *Lindisfarne Gospels*.<sup>7</sup>
- 970 First Old English version of the Gospel of Matthew, based upon Aldred’s gloss. *The Rushworth Gospels*.
- 1000 Aelfric translates abridged Pentateuch and several other portions of Scripture into Old English. *The ‘Wessex Gospels’* and first Old English version of all four Gospels.
- 1200 Orm’s poetical paraphrase of Gospels and Acts in Middle English.
- 1300 *Midland Psalter*—metrical version of the Psalms in Middle English.
- 1320 Richard Rolle’s Middle English *Psalter*.
- 1382 Wycliffe completes translation of the Bible.
- 1388 Wycliffe Bible corrected by John Purvey.

The chronicler William of Malmesbury, 1090-1143, assures us that King Alfred, 849-899, had memorised the New Testament and Psalms together with other Old Testament portions, and was engaged at the time of his death in a new translation of the Psalms. You must realise that the language used was quite



*Part of Luke's Gospel from the Lindisfarne Gospels showing Aldred's translation into Old English written between the lines<sup>8</sup>*

variable throughout the 'Kingdoms' in Britain. An 'English' document produced in Wessex would not necessarily be useful in Mercia or Strathclyde or Northumbria, and we would not find any of these older forms easy to the eye, ear or tongue now! Compare these renderings of Luke 2.7,11:

[11th century: Wessex] and heo cende hyre frumcennedan sunu. and hine mid cildclapum bewand. and hine on binne

alede. forþam þe hig næfdon rum on cumena huse...forþam toðæg eow ys hælend acenned. se is drihten crist on dauides ceastre;

[14th century: Wycliffe] & she childide hir first goten sone, & wlappeðe hym in cloþis & putte hym in a cracche, for þer was not place to hym in þe comun stable...for a saueour is born to day to vs, þat is crist a lord in þe cite of dauid

and for contrast:-

[16th century: Tyndale] And she brought forth her fyrst begotten sonne and wrapped him in swadlynge cloothes and layed him in a manger because ther was no roume for them within in the ynne...for vnto you is borne this daye in the cite of David a saveoure which is Christ ye lorde.

Tyndale may strike us as quaint, but is quite comprehensible—one can read it aloud and hearers would understand; but without some familiarity with the sounds and orthography of Anglo-Saxon English it is none too easy to read Wessex or Wycliffe. Nevertheless, it is good to know that even around 1200 AD Orm had brought John 3.16 to the English of his day:

Thurrrh thatt te Laferrd seggde thus  
*In that the Lord said thus*  
 Till Nicodem withth worde  
*To Nicodemus with word*  
 Swa lufede the Laferrd Godd  
*So loved the Lord God*  
 The Werelld tatt he sennde  
*The world that he sent*

His aghenn sune Allmahtig Godd  
*His own son Almighty God*  
To wurrthen mann on erthe  
*To become man on earth*  
To lesenn mannkinn thurrrh hiss death  
*To release mankind through his death*  
Ut off the defless walde  
*Out of the devil's power*  
That whase trowwenn shall on himm  
*That whosoever shall believe on him*  
Wel mughe wurrthenn borrrghenn<sup>9</sup>  
*Surely may become saved*

The greater problem however for the accuracy and authenticity of all these English manuscript versions was their textual provenance. These were all derived from the Latin Vulgate, not the Biblical language texts. Not only was the starting point wrong—a translation of a translation—but the corruptions in and variations between copies of the Vulgate were growing out of hand in the passage of time.<sup>10</sup> There was at this point in the history of the text of Scripture great need for a method of reproduction which would anchor the text in a stable and accurately repeatable form, and for a return to the awareness and use of the Biblical languages as the only authoritative basis for translation.<sup>11</sup>

Amongst those who used the Latin Bible and the Old English portions derived from it, there was some understanding of the problem of ‘second-hand’ translation. Savour this 11th century poetic Welsh rebuke of those who translated the Psalms from Greek:

This harp the holy Hebrew text  
doth tender  
Which, to their power, whilst everyone  
doth render,  
In Latin tongue with many  
variations  
He clouds the Hebrew rays with  
his translations.  
Thus liquors when twice shifted out  
and poured  
In a third vessel are both cooled  
and soured;  
But holy Jerome truth to light  
did bring  
Briefer and fuller, fetched from  
the Hebrew spring.<sup>12</sup>

### ■ *Printing*

To contemplate the unfolding of history as in very truth the Living God dealing with His people and His Word in the midst of a careless and indifferent world, is a joyful source of refreshment and ground of praise for the believer. This is particularly true of the amazing confluence of events affecting the history of the Bible text in the 15th and 16th centuries. To meet the need just outlined we see that in Europe conditions were just ready for the large scale production of texts. The requirements for book-printing were available: paper was being produced and used in Europe,<sup>13</sup> artists had invented an oil-based ink which could be adapted for printing on paper and vellum, instead of insubstantial watery ink. There were presses in use for printing designs on textiles, adaptable for paper printing, and





*Example of moveable type*

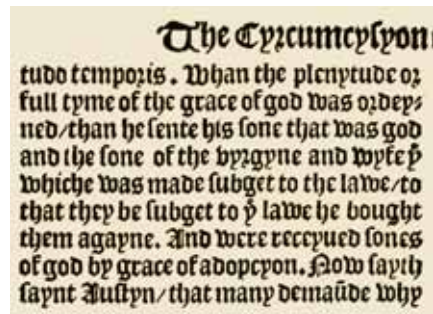
workers were already making metal plates to use for stamping the covers of manuscript books. The time was ripe for Johann Gutenberg's invention of printing with moveable type. Such was the impact of printing, and its use for the Bible and religious material generally, that a contemporary verse expressed his admiration of

*the presse...*

*The worth whereof no tongue can  
well expresse  
So much it doth, and workes  
so readily:  
For which let's give unto the Lord  
all praise,  
That thus bath bless'd us in these  
latter daies.<sup>14</sup>*

Gutenberg, born in Mainz around 1397, was trained as a goldsmith. He set up a foundry with press in Mainz, and experimented with the concept of printing with moveable metal type. Finally, around 1453, he printed the *editio princeps*<sup>15</sup> of the Latin Bible. Unfortunately for him, he was heavily in debt and in 1455 his creditor and partner, Johannes Fust, closed on the loans. Gutenberg did finish printing the Bible, but lost his press equipment and metal fonts to Fust. After this he seems to have wandered to other cities, teaching the new technique of printing, and died in his native town in 1468.

The Englishman William Caxton (1422–91) acquired the technique of letterpress printing when he was in Cologne in 1471–2. In association with the Flemish calligrapher Colard Mansion, Caxton set up a press in Bruges, printing the first books in English there. Then, in 1476, he set up the press in Westminster and printed the first book in England<sup>16</sup> in 1477. Caxton was very cautious about



*Caxton's Golden Legend quoting Galatians 4.4,5<sup>17</sup>*

the political consequences of any attempt to print an English Bible, Lollardy and the Wycliffe Bible being seriously proscribed. However, in his first edition of Jacobus de Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, 1483, he embedded large portions of Scripture material (the greater part of the Old Testament, in fact) which he had translated into English from the Latin and French sources of Voragine.

Book printing is now in place, and Bible production in multiple copies of the same text is possible. One more piece is needful to put the English Bible on track—the break with the Latin text as the basis of translation. There we will take up our journey on the road to the Authorised Version in part two of this article.



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Originally planned as covering the whole Bible, but the Old Testament and Hebrew scholarship must wait their own article.

<sup>2</sup> See also 1 Corinthians 16.21, 2 Thessalonians 3.17 and Philemon 19.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps it could have been from Greek roots *cheiro-graphs*, meaning just the same thing!

<sup>4</sup> Collections of Papyri Frame 15. Manuscripts Division. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library. By kind permission.

<sup>5</sup> By kind permission of The British Library (Cotton Nero D. IV, f27).

<sup>6</sup> The Vulgate of Jerome is scarcely to be recognised in the Vulgate of the Council of Trent.

<sup>7</sup> This is called 'glossing' and the addition of interlinear and marginal translation, comments and remarks is a feature of the handwritten Scripture versions.

<sup>8</sup> By kind permission of The British Library (Cotton Nero D. IV, f143v).

<sup>9</sup> The same passage would seem to be one of Tolkien's sources, as further on the expression 'middell ærd' (middle earth) appears as synonymous with 'thiss werelld'.

<sup>10</sup> Please see the *Quarterly Record* 565 article on Wycliffe for general information, and especially page 25 for opposition to the vernacular Scriptures.

<sup>11</sup> An interesting observation, using modern terminology—all before Wycliffe, although recognisably 'Bible based' reads like poetic paraphrase. Wycliffe, **in terms of the text before him**, approximated more nearly to a formal equivalence approach. Wycliffe, of course, had a thoroughgoing doctrine of Scripture driving him to such carefulness.

<sup>12</sup> *Rhygyfarch [Ricemarch], 1056-99, son of Sulien, Bishop of St. David's*. I realise that he could be read as saying 'stick to the Latin, it's closer to the original', but perhaps the 'Hebrew rays' and 'Hebrew spring' suggest a clearer view?

<sup>13</sup> There was a papermill in Strasbourg around 1430, just about the time that Gutenberg was there!

<sup>14</sup> From Harley mss., 5906b, no.134, a woodcut of a small, early London printing office; C. C. Ryrie, *Formatting the Word of God*, [www.smu.edu/bridwell/publications/ryrie\\_catalog/intro.htm](http://www.smu.edu/bridwell/publications/ryrie_catalog/intro.htm), (28 November 2005).

<sup>15</sup> The expression always used in bibliography for the very first one of its kind.

<sup>16</sup> *Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres*, translated from the French by the 2nd Earl Rivers.

<sup>17</sup> Picture courtesy of David C. Lachman, Antiquarian Theological Bookseller, [www.davidclachman.com](http://www.davidclachman.com)

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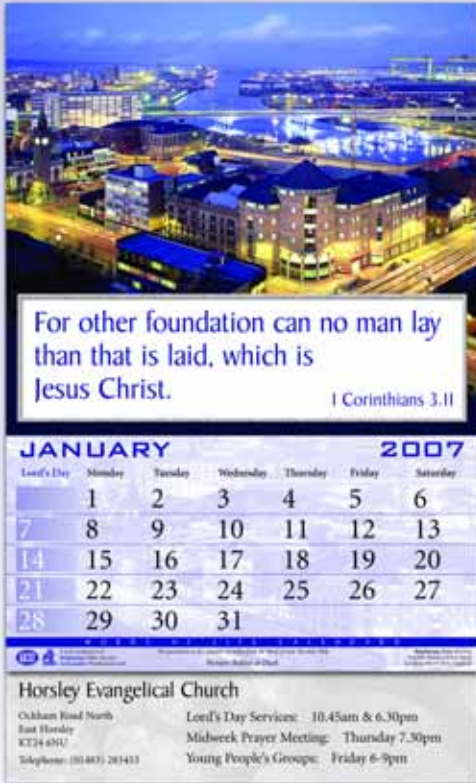
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**T**he American New Testament scholar A. T. Robertson made an unusual comment about the Greek New Testament. He said, ‘The real New Testament is the Greek New Testament. The English is simply a translation of the New Testament, not the actual New Testament’.<sup>1</sup> Whilst we believe he was overstating this, he was illustrating an important point. All New Testament translations—English, Spanish or in any language—are just that: translations. The New Testament was originally written in Greek; it is Greek (with the Hebrew of the Old Testament) that the Authorised Version translators claimed to be ‘the golden pipes, or rather conduits, wherethrough the olive branches empty themselves into the gold’,<sup>2</sup> and which the Westminster Divines said was ‘immediately inspired by God, and, by His singular care and providence, kept pure in all ages’.<sup>3</sup> The Greek New Testament is the same in every place or generation, and the *Textus Receptus*, representing the best manuscripts, is the standard unto which all translations are to be compared. Robertson’s comment is based on his understanding that no language is completely able to render consistently and completely what is found in the Greek.

## ■ The English language

The English language is a very rich, expressive, flexible and idiomatic language, and the Authorised Version is even today the finest, most accurate, most important and influential

translation in English. Robertson states, ‘It is impossible to overestimate the influence of the King James Version upon the language and life of the English-speaking world’.<sup>4</sup> Yet even English has difficulties with certain aspects of Greek grammar and syntax. The glory and majesty of the Greek can occasionally be veiled. One such veiling happens with the little English word ‘for’. We will look at this one small English word and show the importance the Greek has to our Bible knowledge and understanding of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and at how some in our day ignore the truth therein.

Most people when they are reading the Bible read too rapidly and do not stop to consider and define the words they read. Robertson says:

The trouble with all translations is that one’s mind does not pause long enough over a passage to get the full benefit of the truth contained in it. [Using] the Greek compels one to pause over each word long enough for it to fertilize the mind with its rich and fructifying energy. The very words of the English become so familiar that they slip through the mind too easily.<sup>5</sup>

The Society would maintain that it is the very uniqueness of the language of the English Authorised Version that helps greatly to guard against such a tendency.

Robertson’s words are especially true of little words like ‘for’, which we tend to pass over.<sup>6</sup> However, ‘for’ is important, not least because it is a very flexible word which has many meanings and uses in the New Testament. As an English preposition, it has at least twenty-one dictionary definitions, among which are ‘benefit’, ‘cause’, ‘reward’, ‘respect’ and ‘direction’. It can be used as a conjunction and even has a verbal definition. This can be seen by the following simple sentence:

**‘For** this is **for** us and **for** our faith **for** now and **for** ever.’

The reader should note that each ‘for’ has a different meaning. These various usages are also seen in the Bible, and differentiating between these is helpful in understanding correctly what the Bible says; and like with all words in the Bible, ‘for’ must be interpreted according to the context in which it is found.

## Substitution

In this article our interest is in the substitutionary meaning of the Greek word ὑπερ (*hyper*, often translated ‘for’ in the English Bible). The idea of substitution is not unique to the New Testament. In the Old Testament the idea of substitution goes all the way back to

the Garden of Eden. It is clearly seen later in the Bible in the sacrificial system given to the Jews. Perhaps the clearest statement in the Old Testament of the idea of substitution—and which points so strongly to that of the New Testament—is the great prophetic passage in Isaiah 53.6: ‘All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all’. John Gill writes of this:

**and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;** that is, God the Father, against whom we have sinned, from whom we have turned, and whose justice must be satisfied; he has laid on Christ, his own Son, the sins of all his elect ones; which are as it were collected together, and made one bundle and burden of, and therefore expressed in the singular number, “iniquity”, and laid on Christ, and were bore by him, even all the sins of all God’s elect; a heavy burden this! which none but the mighty God could bear; this was typified by laying of hands, and laying of sins upon the sacrifice, and putting the iniquities of Israel upon the head of the scapegoat, by whom they were bore, and carried away.<sup>7</sup>

In the New Testament the word ‘for’ (ὕπερ) is found among other places in John 11.50–52, Galatians 3.13 and 2 Corinthians 5.14. Like the English word ‘for’, ὕπερ has several different meanings. Among them it can mean ‘for, in behalf of, for the sake of someone/something’; specifically it is used in verses dealing with substitution as ‘in place of, instead of, in the name of’ (2 Corinthians 5.14).<sup>8</sup>

The death of Christ was the death of all, because he was dying their death. In becoming the object of divine wrath against human sin, Christ was acting vicariously, viz., ὕπερ [usually transliterated *hyper*] *hemon* [us], not only “on our behalf” or “with a view to our good” but “in our place” (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13). He assumed the liabilities of others in “being made sin” and “becoming a curse”.<sup>9</sup>

Even Greek syntax grammars admit the substitutionary use of ὕπερ in Classical Greek, the Septuagint, the papyri and in verses dealing with salvation in the New Testament.<sup>10</sup>

One of the clearest places which demonstrates the vicarious substitution of Christ is 2 Corinthians 5.14–15, ‘For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died **for** all, then were all dead: and *that* he died **for** all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died **for** them, and rose again’ [bold indicates author’s emphasis]. The Greek can be translated literally as, ‘For the love of Christ is constraining us, because we judged this: that if one died **in place of** all [and he did], therefore all died: and he died **in place of** all, that they who live should not live for themselves, but for him who died and rose again **in their place**’ [bold indicates author’s emphasis]. In other words, Christ died not only ‘for’ or ‘on behalf of’ but ‘in place of’ these Corinthian believers and therefore in place of all believers in all ages in every place.

## ■ Penal Substitution

We see from Romans chapter three that the Lord Jesus Christ became the wrath-ending sacrifice to satisfy the holy anger of God which burned against sin. Jesus stood in the place of guilty sinners and the Lord laid upon Him the iniquity (guilt) of us all. This removal of guilt by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ was to satisfy the justice of God which demanded perfect righteousness from us. Since we are all sinners we all come short of the glory of God (Romans 3.23). As question 152 of the Westminster Larger Catechism states, ‘Every sin, even the least, being against the sovereignty, goodness, and holiness of God, and against his righteous law, deserveth his wrath and curse. . . and cannot be expiated but by the blood of Christ’. Question 33 of the Shorter Catechism says that ‘justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone’. We were enemies of God, but God has brought us near to Himself by the finished sacrifice of Jesus. Thus, we have even been justified—declared not guilty and declared righteous—and reconciled to God, and have been adopted into His family.

This wonderful demonstration of the love of God should constrain us as it did the Corinthian believers. However the truth of this mighty sacrifice is not believed by all who ‘name the name of Christ’—who claim to belong to Him.

## ■ Aberrant Views

Regrettably many people of the liberal or neo-orthodox persuasion do not believe in the vicarious, penal substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They call themselves ‘Christians’ yet they reject what the Scriptures say about Christ’s sacrifice. They form a religion which, although using Christian terminology, teaches doctrines which are alien to what the Bible says. For various reasons the Biblical understanding has been abandoned in favour of views which reject out-of-hand the teaching of the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

Many make this change by taking out of context the teaching that ‘God is love’. They focus on ‘love’ and cannot believe that a loving God could ever be angry—love and anger are mutually exclusive. They find in the Cross and the loving, self-giving death of Christ a wonderful example of how loving Christians should live, which should inspire us to do good works as Jesus did. Others reject the sacrificial aspect of a literal blood atonement as being a part of a ‘slaughterhouse religion’, which again would be foreign to their concept of ‘God is love’. All of this, they believe, makes the Cross and death of Christ more acceptable and reasonable to modern man and to themselves.



In past years this rejection of the truth of Christ's sacrificial death was the domain of those outside of evangelical Christianity. However, in recent years some people—several of whom are very prominent 'Christians'—who classify themselves as 'evangelicals' have left the clear teachings of Scripture. One such person is Steve Chalke. In 2004 Steve Chalke with Alan Mann wrote *The Lost Message of Jesus*,<sup>11</sup> in which they discuss among other things Chalke's views of the death of Christ and the atonement. The book has stirred a great deal of debate, with some evangelicals accepting Chalke as something akin to a prophet and others rejecting any claims he has to the Christian faith.

The Oasis Trust has published an article written by Chalke in which he provides more detail about his beliefs. Among other things he says:

In my view however, the real problem with penal substitution (a theory rooted in violence and retributive notions of justice) is its incompatibility, at least as currently taught and understood, with any authentically Christian understanding of the character of God or genuinely Christocentric worldview—given, for instance, Jesus' own non-violent, 'do not return evil for evil', approach to life. Hence my comment, in *The Lost Message of Jesus*, about the tragedy of reducing God to a 'cosmic child abuser'. Though the sheer bluntness of my imagery might shock some, in truth, it is only because it is a stark 'unmasking' of the violent, pre-Christian thinking behind such a Theology.<sup>12</sup>

In responding to criticisms he knew would come about the original statement in his book, he said, 'The fact is that the cross isn't a form of cosmic child abuse—a vengeful Father, punishing his Son for an offence he has not even committed. Understandably, both people inside and outside of the Church have found this twisted version of events morally dubious and a huge barrier to faith.'<sup>13</sup> It appears that Chalke was afraid someone might think poorly of God because of the perceived negative nature of the Cross and a God who would punish sin in His own Son as our substitute. It is sad that he thinks that penal substitution reduces God to a 'cosmic child abuser'. He does not see the Cross in the light of the Everlasting Covenant the Triune God made. The Lord Jesus Christ was not an 'abused child' or unwilling participant in our redemption. He **willingly** went to the Cross and offered Himself in our place (John 10.15,17; Galatians 1.4; Titus 2.14; Hebrews 12.2).

Mr. Chalke knew several things would happen about the publication of his views. From the way he writes it appears that he anticipated the way his views would be received. He knew that they would be controversial. He also knew that his views would upset both evangelicals and reformed Christians alike and that many would be offended to the point of open debate and division. Indeed, he was right: all of these things happened; as a result he sold more books.

## ■ What saith the Scripture?

One prayer that is necessary is that Christians both young and old will search ‘the scriptures daily, whether those things [are] so’ (Acts 17.11). For the answer to this aberrant view is to be found in the Bible.

1. Jesus was smitten of God:

‘Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.’ Isaiah 53.4

2. Jesus was wounded, bruised and chastised for us:

‘But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.’ Isaiah 53.5

3. Jesus took upon Himself our iniquity:

‘All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.’ Isaiah 53.6

4. Jesus took away our sins:

‘The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1.29

5. Jesus gave his life (ὕπερ) for us:

‘I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.’ John 10.11

6. Jesus, the Living Bread, gives His life (ὕπερ) for us:

‘I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.’ John 6.51

7. Jesus became a curse (ὕπερ) for us and redeemed us:

‘Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree’ Galatians 3.13

8. Jesus died (ὕπερ) in our place:

‘For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then

were all dead: and *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' 2 Corinthians 5.14–15

9. Jesus was made to be sin (ὕπερ) for us:

'For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' 2 Corinthians 5.21

10. Jesus the Just suffered (ὕπερ) for the unjust in order to bring us to God:

'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit' 1 Peter 3.18

A great many verses could be cited to demonstrate the point the Bible makes about the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. However, in the face of the evidence above, an old saying rings true: 'There are none so blind as those who **will** not see'.

## Conclusion

We must be very clear about what our little word 'for' means in these verses. Too often it is bypassed, going unnoticed when we are reading our English Bibles. However, it has such an important function. When its meaning is understood from the Greek, it clearly and unmistakably identifies the death of Christ on the cross as one of substitution. The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ was 'for' us in the sense of 'on our behalf' and 'in our place'. God the Father laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, and He took the guilt of our sin. In our place Jesus the Just and Righteous Substitute took the punishment for every sin we have committed or ever will commit: a propitiatory sacrifice made to satisfy the justice of a Holy God. Jesus then declared 'It is finished' (literally from the Greek this is, 'It has been finished and stands finished', John 19.30).

As the Old and New Testaments clearly say:

He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. Isaiah 53.11–12

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 2 Corinthians 5.14–15



### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> A. T. Robertson, *The Minister and His Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Book House, 1983), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *The Translators to the Reader: Being a Reprint of The Original Preface to the Authorized Version of 1611* (London: Trinitarian Bible Society, 1998), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith, 1.8.

<sup>4</sup> Robertson, p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> There is an old test designed to determine one's proofreading skills, in which a person is asked to find the number of times the letter 'f' is used in a sentence. The sentence contains several longer words beginning with the letter, but also has several occurrences of 'for' and 'of'. Invariably, some or all of the uses of 'f' in these little words are missed.

<sup>7</sup> John Gill, *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, 'Isaiah 53.6' (e-Sword, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition (Chicago, IL, USA: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 1030-31.

<sup>9</sup> Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 3.1197.

<sup>10</sup> see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), pp. 383-389.

<sup>11</sup> Steve Chalke and Alan Mann, *The Lost Message of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Zondervan, 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Steve Chalke, *Redeeming the cross: The Lost Message of Jesus & the cross of Christ*, [www.oasistrust.org/temp/TheSpLostspMessagespofspJesuspsspAtonement.pdf](http://www.oasistrust.org/temp/TheSpLostspMessagespofspJesuspsspAtonement.pdf) (24 November 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Chalke and Mann, p. 182.

# The Word of God Among All Nations



'The seed is the Word of God'

## Europe

### From Kaunas, Lithuania

Thank you for the 2005 Scripture calendars. It was pure joy to distribute the calendars! We could have distributed many more, and we find that folks who are otherwise hostile or indifferent to the Gospel happily hang them in their homes. What a blessing to sow the Word of God! By December 31st last year we had distributed virtually all of the Lithuanian Words of Life Calendars. We advertised them in three newspapers in two different cities (populations of 16,000 and 35,000). To save postage costs, we asked folks to come to the Culture Hall in each town, where we set up a literature table for distribution. All the calendars we allocated to each city were gone in two to three hours! Thank you for your sacrifice for the spreading of the Word. I realise it is still early, but I would like to share our thoughts about the coming year's Words of Life Calendars. We would like to distribute eight thousand of the Lithuanian calendars next year. We would do so in small cities we are already working in, and also try to reach outlying villages in the

vicinity of those cities. Most villagers have limited contact with anyone spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this may provide an opportunity to evangelise them. Eight thousand is a rather ambitious number, but we feel sure we could easily distribute them all. We could also use a token amount of Russian, Ukrainian, and English Words of Life Calendars.

### From Vilnius, Lithuania

The calendar distribution in the towns of Vilkaviskis and Jonava went very well. After advertising when they would be available, people were waiting at the doors to receive their free calendars. In less than two hours all calendars were distributed at both locations. With each Scripture calendar, copies of the Gospel of Mark were also given out. Keep praying with us that the Gospels and calendars will be read, and that souls will respond to the Word of God. In the capital city of Vilnius, people who were awaiting the arrival of calendars inundated the Centre for Reformed Literature with enquiries and requests. People eagerly awaited their arrival and were grateful

to receive their allocated copies. We sincerely thank the Trinitarian Bible Society for making these beautifully presented calendars available to the Lithuanian people, and pray this venture will bring many to know the One True and Living God through the Scripture verses to the good of their never dying souls and the increase of His Kingdom.

### **From Dublin, Ireland**

We would once more take this opportunity of writing to you with news of Scripture Text Posters. We are grateful to the Lord for the continued open door for the message of the cross here in Ireland. Thank you for your part with us in this work. It is the Lord's work, and together we can share in the joy and blessing of serving Him. It is good to be able to report that we continue to be very encouraged by the many responses we have received in recent months. We were heartened recently to learn of the salvation of a young lady from Cork. She informed us that the path that led her to being saved began when she saw a Scripture Text (Acts 16.31) on a poster site in Abbey Street in Dublin. How wonderful to have played a part in that chain that led to the saving of a precious soul. We trust that you along with us are rejoicing in these opportunities and encouragements. Please continue to pray for God's Word to touch hearts, wherever it is displayed.

### **From Exeter, Devon, England**

Please find enclosed a small but sincere gift for the work of the Trinitarian Bible Society.

Please put this towards the Bible Verse Posters you display on railway stations. A very long time ago those posters brought a sinner travelling the wrong way back to a merciful Saviour. Those posters are always a precious reminder of that time in my life. I am now once again train travelling, but by God's grace I am on the right track! With the verse, "turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness" (Joel 2.13), He drew me back with cords of love. Praise His Name. Thank you for all your work over the years.

*The Society has a long-term exercise of writing to the 34,000 junior schools in the country, offering them free gifts of our Ten Commandments text cards and posters and also free Bibles. The Society has also specifically contacted Church of England middle and secondary schools, and Church of England affiliated schools. The response from headteachers has been most encouraging.*

### **From a school In Hastings, East Sussex, England**

Please send 250 copies of the Ten Commandments Text Cards, and 10 copies of the Ten Commandments Posters, and also further information regarding free Bibles for distribution among pupils.

### **From a school in Aston-under-Lyne, Lancashire, England**

We are going to present a Bible to each of our Year-6 leavers at their last assembly with us.

We think that, for many, it will be the only Bible they have held. Therefore, we are exposing them to the opportunity of consulting the Bible at different stages of their life.

### **From a school in Leyton, London**

I am sorry it has taken so long to thank you for supplying us with the 30 Bibles for the children in my class. They were all very keen to receive one, even the Muslim children, but I did tell them to ask their parents if it was alright to receive a Bible. Three of the five Muslim families from my class were happy to accept one. Please pray for them.

## **Asia**

### **From Kalaymyo, Myanmar**

Thank you so much for eight boxes of parcels received safely during the latter part of September. We are very grateful to you for what you have done in the past and also at present for my people. Most of the Holy Bibles were distributed to two Theological Colleges, and a few copies went to church members. We distributed the Greek New Testaments to the students studying New Testament Greek. But all the students could not yet get copies. The copies are still few. Providing Bibles is very important for many reasons. It is helping students who could not purchase Bibles. There is no bookstore for English Bible.

### **From Quezon, Philippines**

I'm grateful that you have given us Bible grant. This will be of great help to my ministry.



### *Bible received by a friend in the Philippines*

I'm a minister of church and at the same time am teaching Christian Education or Value Education in a private secondary school. My purpose of asking grant from your office is because I need it in my class. Most of the students enrolled in our school have no Bible. I handle ten classes with 450 students every week. The Bible is needed for Scripture reading inside the class, memory verses and meditation. Also before our classes start all faculty and staff together with our principal have a morning devotion and most of the time we have a Scripture reading. I know that this grant cost much and am praying that God in some way will repay your expenses just for me to receive this grant.



*College students receive the Scriptures in India*

### **From Tirumalai, India**

I am born in a Hindu family. I am staying in a hostel and studying. I came to know about Jesus Christ through a Gospel prayer meeting held there. I got a small sized TBS English Bible freely. I read the Bible and accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour.

### **From Kovilpatti, India**

I am a nurse. I got your TBS small sized Bible free. I am reading it daily. I am also giving it to my nursing friends to read. I got the joy of salvation. Daily I am getting spiritual nourishment from the Bible.

### **From Udumalipettai, India**

I am a High School teacher. I received your TBS English Bible. I am keeping that Bible as

a treasure and reading it daily. The Scripture verses are strengthening me to progress in spiritual life. I am attending Christian services.

### **From Thuthoor, India**

I am a college professor. For many days I was reading your TBS English Bible. I now know about Jesus Christ and He is my Lord and Saviour. I have committed myself to Jesus Christ. Now I am reading the Bible to proceed in my spiritual life. Please send me 50 English Bibles to give freely to the college professors.

### **From Adyar, India**

Greetings in Jesus' Name. Thank you very much for regularly sending Golden Thoughts Calendars and Holy Bible in English to our Mission. We need more English Holy Bible, which is more useful to university students.



There is much demand. Nowadays there are so many new versions on the market. Students like the King James Version.

### From Tamil Nadu, India

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We received your grant of two parcels of English Bibles. We gave sixty-four English Bibles freely for the newly converted people. We could take the photograph of only a few receiving it. We have sent the rest of the books for the secret Christians who knew English individually by post. We feel sorry for that. Here you can see the college students who have recently accepted Jesus. High school students, nurses, orphanage teachers and other converted youths thankfully receive the English Bibles and showing that.

### Africa

#### From Arua, Uganda

Everything in Africa is a bit slowly. Some months ago I could bring a part of the French Bibles to Congo together with a few thousands

of Bible correspondence course. Some weeks ago I was again there. I could meet several leaders from the church. Some of them are shown on the enclosed picture. These are pastors, evangelists and teachers. All of them lost their Bible during the war and they were really thankful for the new one you have sent. Unfortunately we could not give to everybody a Bible. Only to those who take part as teachers in the correspondence programme. It is difficult to describe the joy of these people. I'm now everywhere asked for new Bible, even if I cannot help. Sometimes it is a nuisance to me, but it is also nice to experience in that way the hunger for God's Word. Many thanks for your efforts.

#### From Saurimo, Angola

In July last year I received here in Saurimo a consignment of Portuguese Gospels of John, New Testaments and both large and small Bibles for the east of Angola and especially amongst the Chokwe people. We cannot tell how grateful we are for the grant and what a help these Bibles are for the folks here in Angola. I gave a Bible each to a group of

*African church leaders with their new Bibles*



youngsters from my road, most of them non-churchgoers, whom I have taught to read, and now come to a Bible study with me. They were thrilled to receive them, and one came back after class and said 'is this really what they call the Holy Bible?' When I assured him it was, he said 'I've wanted one for a long time, but I thought they were only for preachers in church. I can't believe I have one of my own.' The following week, when he came for the study, his Bible was carefully wrapped in plastic from a plastic bag he had found and melted at the corners to hold it in place. They take so little care of anything that it was great to see how much his Bible meant to him. How I pray that this lad of 12 years may go on to really know the Lord, and maybe one day be a preacher too!

### From Ilesa, Nigeria

Greetings to you and all members of the Trinitarian Bible Society. Praise God that I received all the nine packages you sent in good condition. Immediately I received the nine packages containing Ruby Bibles and Golden Thoughts Calendars, I make a trip to Republic of Niger where population of Muslims are numerous. I preached the Word of God from one town to another. I have many troubles in Muslim countries. The policemen in the Niger Republic arrest me and fight me, and beat me, and put me in their guard room for three months because I preach and spread the Word of God. Muslims came from one house to another. They talk about burning the preacher and his motor car. They burnt my car which I used for evangelism. They take me to court and they told the Judge that I am preaching

the Word of Jesus Christ, and I am turning Muslims to Christ! The Judge say, 'You are the person.' I say, 'Yes.' The Judge say, 'Stop your mouth.' They did not allow me to say anything. The Muslims told the Justice that I have turned many Muslims to Christ and they are joining the Church. For 38 years, since 1964, I have been receiving your materials, Bibles, books, tracts, New Testaments with Psalms, and Golden Thoughts Calendars. Muslims in Niger Republic kill many Christians and burn houses and churches. I was jailed for three months with hard labour. I thank God that I was in jail because of the Word of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3.12-18). I thank God that after I finished my time in prison, I am still continuing to preach the Word of God. Throughout the Republic of Niger, untold millions of Muslims are dying every day. Your gifts can help reach Muslims in Niger with the Gospel while there is still time. There is no rest for me and my co-workers. We are in the field every day and night because I am thinking about the souls lost without Christ. As God used you to provide the means, He can use native missionaries like us to finish the task of planting Churches in every tribe in Africa.

*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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## *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 catalogue please write to the Society at the address given.*

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## **Details from the Lindisfarne Gospels**



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