

THE WORD OF GOD  
AMONG ALL NATIONS

TBS

# Quarterly Record



The Magazine of the Trinitarian Bible Society

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2017





# 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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## *Quarterly Record Production Team*

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# The 186<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting

GOD WILLING

commences at **11.00 a.m.** on

**Saturday, 16 September 2017**

at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, London SE1 6SD

The Business Meeting at **11.00** will include reports and updates on the Society's work.

After the Business Meeting,

at **2.00 p.m.**

**Mr J. R. Rutt**

Pastor of Lamberhurst Strict Baptist Chapel, Kent,  
is expected to preach

Lunch will be served between the Meetings

All are invited to attend







# Open Day

The next Open Day is to be held, if the Lord will, at the Society's International Headquarters in London, on

**Saturday 11 March 2017,**  
from **12.00 noon**  
until **5.00 p.m.**

We anticipate a full afternoon of displays, guided tours and informal talks, including the latest on our translation projects, along with opportunities for fellowship, as we once again present the work of Bible translation, publication and distribution. Please mark your calendars and make plans to join us if you can.



THE WORD OF GOD AMONG ALL NATIONS



# From the Desk of the General Secretary

As the days of the New Year begin to slip away, we are reminded of both the fast passage of time and the Lord's great goodness and kindness. It always becomes us to look back with thanksgiving and humble gratitude, and to look forward in prayerful dependence upon the Lord for His bounteous faithfulness, acknowledging that we deserve nothing, and that all that we receive from Him is in His infinite goodness and kindness to the wholly unworthy.

As spiritual death and darkness prevail in so many parts of the world, the need for the Word of God is exceedingly great. In the Lord's goodness, the opportunities open to the Society are many, but being a comparatively small organisation with very limited resources, we are severely restricted in what we can do. However, our confidence is in the Lord who was pleased to bless and wonderfully use the 'five loaves and two fishes' (Luke 9.13) to the feeding of the multitudes during His ministry here in this world when He tabernacled amongst us (see John 1.14). We pray that He who

knows the end from the beginning, and who has infinite resources at His hand, may be pleased to use the Society and its work to His praise and glory during 2017 as we endeavour to provide faithful and reliable copies of the Holy Scriptures for the benefit of His church and for the furtherance of His work among the nations of the world.

As you know the past year was memorable for the Society, and we thank God for His gracious provision in supplying the wonderful new premises the Society has in London, and for enabling so much to be accomplished as we have been engaged in the translation and distribution of the Holy



Scriptures. Before us this year, God willing, are several major translation projects that are being concluded after many years of intensive activity. A number of editorial projects are just commencing, whilst many others are well under way. All who are involved in these projects need the prayers of the Lord's people, and we would value your remembrance of them before the Throne of Grace each day. Details of some of these many projects will be found in the Editorial Director's Report on page 17.

We are very grateful to Philip Hopkins, our Editorial Director, for his significant help in overseeing the work of the Editorial Department, and rejoice with him at what has been accomplished over the past six years. Very sadly, following a further bout of ill health, Mr Hopkins has decided that he needs to reduce the amount of time he works for the Society to preserve his health and to give more time to the church he pastors. Therefore as from the beginning of this year he will be working only three days a week for the Society. The General Committee is giving prayerful consideration to the implications of this development and wishes Mr Hopkins a greater measure of health and strength in the days to come, thanks him for his considerable contribution to the Society, and is grateful that he will be able to continue with the Society for the present as Editorial Director, God willing.

In this edition of the *Quarterly Record* will be found the edited edition of the excellent sermon preached by the Rev Malcolm Watts, a Vice-President of the Society, at the Annual General Meeting last September; a helpful and searching devotional article on Jacob by the Society's President, the Rev G. Hamstra; an interesting article on Luther and the relevance of the Reformation for our younger (and older!) readers by Mr Adrian Stoutjesdyk, the General Secretary of our Canadian Branch; a piece by the Resources Director Mr D. Broome on

some of the difficulties that the Society is currently facing as well as the Lord's rich sufficiency; and some encouraging reports on the distribution of the Society's Scriptures.

As the Lord was pleased to give to His 'church in the wilderness' (Acts 7.38) a Bezaleel in the days of Moses (Exodus 31.2), and a Samuel in the days of the Judges, so the Lord was pleased to grant an Apostle Paul in the early days of the New Testament church. Similarly, the Lord was pleased to raise up a John Wycliffe and a Jan Hus in the fourteenth century, and a Martin Luther, a John Calvin, and a John Knox in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These were all men raised up of God to fulfil distinctive activity in the days in which they lived. The last named were among those who were provided by God to be foremost in the great work of the reviving and the reforming of His church in the years leading up to and during that period of time now known as the Protestant Reformation, the 500th anniversary of the generally recognised commencement of which is being remembered this year.

Of course, these great men of the era of the Protestant Reformation, whose names are now so familiar to us, were not the only ones who were employed of God in the great work that was to be undertaken in their day. We are told that in the days of Moses Bezaleel had a colleague named Aholiab, as well as others, to work with him. They were all—Bezaleel, Aholiab, as well as all those who remained unnamed—especially equipped by God for the significant work they had to do for the people of God in the particular time that they lived. 'Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded' (Exodus 36.1).

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During the years of the Protestant Reformation, there were also in the different lands of Europe many others besides Wycliffe in England, Luther in Germany, Calvin in France, and Knox in Scotland, who were employed in the great work of God of their day, whose names have likewise in the providence of God not been recorded in the annals of history. We know that there were many who laboured faithfully in their humbler and less public stations of life; in their homes, in their fields and in their barns; they were men and women and boys and girls of prayer, who in their different spheres of activity and influence sought

the glory of their God and the good of His church. Many not only had learned the inestimable blessing and privilege of serving Christ in their homes and in their churches, but also some of them had learned what it meant to speak well of their Lord and Master even before their persecuting judges, and how to sing His praises in the filth and squalor of prison cells and even in the fires, on the scaffolds, and on the battlefields, of martyrdom. Whilst their names may be

almost completely unknown to us, and they may have been unknown to many in their own day, we know that they knew their God (see Daniel 11.32) and that they were 'known of God' (Galatians 4.9), and are all now in the presence of their Redeemer and King, as members of 'the general assembly and church of



**The Prohibited Reading** by Belgian artist Karel Ooms.

*In many parts of Europe during 16th and 17th centuries, the reading of the Scriptures in the vernacular was prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church and carried serious penalties.*



the firstborn' (see Hebrews 12.23), engaged in the pure and perfect worship of the Triune God.

But what was it that gave these people this holy boldness, unswerving conviction, and amazing courage? Simply stated, like the church of Thessalonica to whom the Apostle Paul wrote in his first epistle, the 'gospel came not [unto them] in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost... [and they] turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God' (1 Thessalonians 1.5, 9). Without question, like the Thessalonians, they and their lives had been mightily, radically, and demonstrably changed. They had been converted. This was true of the mighty men of God of the times whose names, lives and writings have been passed down to us, but it was also true of the many humble followers of Christ whose names are no longer remembered and whose individual legacies have been likewise forgotten. They had all been 'taught of God' (John 6.45). By the matchless and powerful grace of God they had been born from above, born of water and of the Spirit, and had entered into the Kingdom of God (see John 3.3, 5). They who had been 'dead in trespasses and sins' (Ephesians 2.1) had been converted and made new creatures, and now 'old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' (2 Corinthians 5.17); they were now the sons and daughters of the Most High God, enlisted to be engaged in the battles of the Lord.

The Protestant Reformation was another time of which it could have been said that the then-known world, and multitudes in it, were being turned upside down (see Acts 17.6), and this by the instrumentality of the Holy Bible, the Word of God, the Sword of the Lord, in the hands of the people. But the Word was not only in the hands of the people, it was also in the hand of God, and it was going forth with a constant freshness, vitality and mighty power from the

very mouth of King Jesus, sitting upon His throne in glory at God the Father's right hand (see Isaiah 55.11 and Revelation 1.16).

In the wondrous and glorious unfolding of the remarkable providence of Almighty God during the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God' (Ephesians 6.17) was to be seen by many again and again being taken from its scabbard, where it appeared to have remained hidden to so great an extent for so many centuries, but now it was being wielded once again by the Lord of Hosts, the King and Head of His church, as He went forth conquering and to conquer, fighting against the principalities and powers of sin and darkness. The Lord was accompanying His Word and the preaching of the everlasting Gospel with the power of His Spirit, convicting of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come, and wondrously converting sinners to Himself that they might be a seed to do Him service and a generation to call Him blessed.

In those days, the Word of God was being known and experienced as 'quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [to be] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart' (Hebrews 4.12). Many found to their everlasting joy that 'Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; *whereby* the people fall under thee' (Psalm 45.5).

As the work of the Reformation progressed from very small and humble beginnings and spread further and further across the lands of Europe, and rooted itself deeper and deeper in the minds, hearts and lives of the people, so the Lord was continuously at work preparing in each generation in the different countries men who were to be engaged in different aspects of the work of His Kingdom. Some were to fulfil

public ministries whilst others were to be engaged in private services. All, however, had their role and calling, and all were being equipped for their specific tasks by the Redeemer, who graciously supplied their every need from the array of provisions contained in the Covenant of Grace (see Psalm 68.18 and Philippians 4.19). There were those who ‘tarried at home’ (Psalm 68.12) whilst others were to be engaged in the forefront of the battle against Satan and the kingdom of darkness. For this fiery work of battling against the very bulwarks of Satan’s kingdom these men (so wonderfully saved by God’s grace from the kingdom of sin and Satan) were being enriched with the Spirit of God and endowed with other gifts and rare natural abilities, to perform very special and demanding tasks that were to be of such inestimable value to the church of Christ throughout the whole world for many centuries.

These men who were thus prepared and blessed of God to be engaged in this profound, distinctive, and demanding work, we may refer to as New Testament Bezaleels and Aholiabs, ‘wise hearted [men] in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded’ (Exodus 36.1). Among them were to be the men we have previously mentioned: Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Calvin, Knox, and others of that galaxy of men who were so mightily used of God to spearhead the work of the Protestant Reformation.

However, in addition to those who head this list there were many others, including those who were raised up of God and blessed with wisdom and understanding, discernment and grace to know how to undertake the arduous task of translating the Word of God from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek into many of the languages of Europe. Their ministry

was not only to translate, but also to revise and further revise, polish and further polish, what had been translated by them and by others, prayerfully, in the fear of God, trembling at His Word. This they were to do until they had achieved their task of making the pure divinely inspired and preserved Word of God in the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek speak and shine through in the receptor languages spoken by the European peoples in which they had been working. Their earnest desire was that these ‘books’ on which they had been so laboriously working—now in the languages of Europe—might truly be accorded the title of the Holy Scriptures, and be known as the Word of God in the different tongues of the peoples.

As has been mentioned, Bezaleel and Aholiab did not work alone. There were others who worked with them in preparing the service of the sanctuary. Unlike Bezaleel and Aholiab, their names are unknown. Nevertheless, they each had their individual work to fulfil, whatever it may have been. Further, as we have stated above, at the time of the Reformation there was not only John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Martin Luther, John Calvin and John Knox. There were also many thousands of others who helped in the great work of reforming the church. Most of their names are also unknown, but they fulfilled their role and honourably served God in their day and generation. They undertook their tasks for the sake of their Lord and Redeemer. They, and all others who in different periods of time have in like manner served the Lord in a more private capacity, may not be remembered and honoured by their fellow men for what they have done; nevertheless we know they have the approbation of their Master and Lord, their Redeemer and King, who sees and knows all, and Who is ‘not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name’ (Hebrews 6.10).

This is surely applicable to us each as we commence 2017. If we by the grace of God have been brought to understand and know for ourselves something of the Divine power, authority, and blessing of the Word of God, then we can also associate directly in the great work of providing our fellow men with copies of the Holy Scriptures that are accurately and reliably translated from the most faithful Hebrew and Greek texts. The Trinitarian Bible Society follows in the footsteps of the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century, closely adhering to their principles regarding the divinely inspired and divinely preserved text of Holy Scripture and the Biblical philosophy they employed in the translation of the Word of God. As part of our constitutional remit we try to ensure that those who translate the Holy Scriptures for the Society are those who, like Bezaleel and Aholiab, are suitably qualified and spiritually equipped for this demanding and difficult task; and we endeavour to ensure that all that is done in any area of our work in the name of the Society is undertaken Biblically and with a single eye to the glory of God.

Now, whilst you and I may not have been blessed of God with any distinctive gift or ability in this area, and we would each shy away from being counted among the 'named' people of God as Bezaleel or Aholiab, or Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, Calvin or Knox, we nevertheless have a God-honouring role to play in the service of our Lord and Master if we are the Lord's people. It may be a comparatively small role, a role that may not attract attention or become a headline in the world's newspapers or in a Christian magazine, but it is a role that is very necessary. It is a role that is important. It is a

role that we have warrant to believe will be noticed and approved by the Master.

Whilst we may not be able to assist directly in the very difficult work of translating the Bible, there are other ways in which we can be of considerable help in this great work. We can assist in the all-important and continuing need that there is for prayer: prayer that those who are engaged in the complex and difficult work of translating the Holy Scriptures in different languages may be given much wisdom, grace, discernment and help from the Lord each day.

Also, we can assist financially by helping to contribute towards the extremely expensive activity, in which the Society is engaged, of translating the Word of God in many languages. There is a cost associated with every part of the work of the Kingdom of God, not least in the provision of the Holy Scriptures. Each translation project may take many, many years to complete and involve the expenditure each year of very substantial amounts of money. Last year, for example, the total amount spent by the Society on its editorial work amounted to an estimated total of £650,000 (equivalent to US\$828,000, Can\$1,099,000, Aus\$1,109,000 and NZ\$1,157,000): an enormous sum of money for a small organisation such as the Society to find year after year.

Let us go forward, by the grace of God, for the glory of His Name and the furtherance of His cause and Kingdom through the translation, publication, and distribution of faithful and reliable translations of His Holy Word.

**Brethren, pray for us!**

# JACOB AT PENIEL

And he said, Let  
me go, for the day  
breaketh. And he said,  
I will not let thee go,  
except thou bless me.

## Genesis 32.26


**T**he light of the day is an emblem of truth and purity, of joy and heaven, and of God Himself. The darkness of the night appears to be an unpleasant contrast. Yet at night we often seek repose from the weary activities of the day. Besides, the night is a favourable time for reflection and being alone with God.

Three nights were of special significance in the life of Jacob. On these occasions he experienced rich blessings in the presence of God. The first (Genesis 28.10–22) was at

Bethel where the Lord graciously revealed Himself to Jacob in an encouraging dream. The second (Genesis 31.3–16) was at Mahanaim, when the Most High spoke to Jacob again by means of a dream and commanded him to return to his father's home. The third night (32.13–32) was the most important. While Jacob was about to re-enter the Land of Promise, he received the richest revelation thus far in his life. This time it was a mysterious reality, not a dream-vision.

Jacob was alone on the north side of the Jabbok River. In the solitude of the night, he tried to prepare himself for the meeting





with his brother. At Mahanaim, the Lord had called him to return home. Was this not enough of an assurance to convince Jacob that the Lord would be with him? Besides, had the Lord not promised Jacob at Bethel never to leave him and to bring him back in safety? Yet the patriarch was not ready to meet his brother. Esau was coming with four hundred men. This filled Jacob with great alarm.

Jacob's faith needed strengthening. Consequently, Jacob sought the face of Him Who was the Strength of his life. Thus he hoped to be encouraged to meet his brother

to His promises. However, Jacob had not been faithful to his God. He had walked in deceitful ways. The holy God wrestled with an unclean sinner. So often Jacob had not trusted in the Lord and put his confidence in his own guile. The Lord sought to humble Jacob and to bring him in complete submission to Himself. He desired the highest place in Jacob's heart.

With justice on His side, God could have departed from this sinner who had dishonoured his gracious Maker and Provider. It appeared as if the Lord would do so. Did not the holy Wrestler say to Jacob, 'Let me go' (Genesis 32.26)?

without fear. However, in order to be secure in the presence of his brother, Jacob must first meet his Maker and become reconciled to Him; his fear of Esau's vengeance was rooted in an evil conscience.

When Jacob sought to be strengthened, the opposite seemed to occur. In the darkness of the night, a man came to wrestle with Jacob. As this wrestling continued it became evident that this Man was not an ordinary man. This Wrestler was the Angel of the Lord, the preincarnate Christ, the visible manifestation of the invisible God. The wrestling was physical, yet it was at the same time more of a spiritual struggle between God and Jacob.

The awesome wrestling was not a momentary struggle; it lasted until the lonely night was almost spent. It seemed as if God wrestled against Jacob as an enemy. During the twenty years since Bethel, the Lord had richly blessed Jacob and had been faithful

In this night of conflict, Jacob experienced a loneliness of a special nature. No friend or loved one could give him the least support. He was alone with God, Who wrestled with him and requested to depart.

Would God, in His divine displeasure, depart from Jacob? How unbearable the thought! At Bethel, in spite of his sins, God had visited and appeared to him. The Lord had brought him safely to Haran and had kept and blessed him there for twenty years. Besides, God had called him at Mahanaim to return to the Promised Land and had sent His angels to encourage him. This same God now opposed Jacob and revealed His superior strength by dislocating Jacob's hip. God had shown Jacob his sinful unworthiness.

Jacob could not bear to be separated from God. The most urgent desire of his heart was to be loved and pardoned by his God. Thus, the sacred wrestling came



to its powerful climax when Jacob, with tears, made this supplication and cried out, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me'. By the power of faith and prayer, Jacob prevailed with God. The mighty God let Himself be conquered by a weak, sinful worm of the dust, 'and he blessed him there' (Genesis 32.29).

By his wrestling with God, Jacob learned that he could not prevail with God by the arm of flesh but only by the noble weapons of faith and prayer. At Peniel, Jacob entered a new stage of his life. He received a new name, Israel,<sup>1</sup> for as a prince he had prevailed with God. Having peace with God, he was prepared to meet every earthly foe, including his brother, Esau.

This wrestling of Jacob with the Lord provides a precious encouragement for helpless sinners to lay their need before the Lord and prevail with Him in humble prayer and fervent supplication. The Lord has never said to the house of Jacob, 'Seek ye me in vain' (Isaiah 45.19). He has graciously promised, 'Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it' (Psalm 81.10).

Endnote:

1. The name Israel means 'a prince of God'.



**Tulul adh-Dhahab and the Zarqa River**  
*Situated in the State of Jordan it is believed that this is Peniel and the Jabbok River of the Scriptures*



# Is the **Reformation** still really relevant today?

A letter to our younger readers

by **A. Stoutjesdyk**

Canadian General Secretary

**S**o what if Luther tacked a paper on a church door in Wittenberg in October 1517? Why should you be interested in what he did then? For that matter, why should you bother commemorating the Reformation anyway?

Five centuries! That's five hundred years! Is the stuff that happened then so important that it needs to be commemorated? You don't want to be disrespectful, but aren't some older people going overboard with this whole Reformation commemoration thing? Why should you get involved? Is anything that happened that long ago relevant to your generation, to people living in the twenty-first century?

If I think that the Reformation is still relevant today, I should be able to give you some clear and sound reasons. I can't really expect

you to appreciate Reformation history just because I do. I should be able to tell you why I think the Reformation remains relevant today. And that's what I'm trying to do in this letter.

Luther was a protestor. Today, many protest loudly against Biblical precepts. Luther protested for Biblical precepts. Because he saw the errors and abuses in the Roman Catholic Church, he could echo David's comment in 1 Samuel 17.29: *'Is there not a cause?'* David, the shepherd lad, could not bear to hear Goliath, the armoured Philistine giant, blaspheme the God of Israel.

Luther, an unknown monk in a European backwater, could not bear to see and hear the God-dishonouring errors and corruptions of the Roman church. At first, he stood alone: he had no placard-waving mob to support him. However, the God whom

he honoured gave him courage to go to the Diet of Worms in 1521<sup>1</sup> even if there would be as many devils as there were tiles on the roofs! Because his conscience was captive to the Word of God, he could confess before the emperor and every other dignitary attending the Diet of Worms that 'it is neither safe nor honest to act against conscience. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.'

in the end the truth would conquer. Such God-given confidence gave the Reformers courage, steadfastness, and hope even as the flames curled up around the stake.

Don't you think that such faith-inspired heroism is an example with relevance for today? So often, 'The best lack all conviction, while the worst | Are full of passionate intensity.'<sup>2</sup> Do you have a conscience captive to the Word of God? Do you have



***Martin Luther nails his Ninety-five Theses, or Disputation on the Power of Indulgences, to the door of All Saints Church Wittenberg 31 October 1517***

Your parents and grandparents are often very pessimistic about the future of the church and society in the Western world. Atheism, hedonism, materialism are the gods of many. Islam threatens from within and abroad. Many are wilfully ignorant of the Bible or openly hostile to it. Was the world of the Reformers any better? Yet the Reformers did not despair; they did not shrug their shoulders, and write off their world. They spoke up. They eloquently proclaimed the truth, the importance of the Bible, and the need for repentance. Already in 1381, John Wycliffe believed that

a conscience willing humbly to take a stance for the Word of God? God's Name, God's Word and God's Truth are often trampled underfoot by the lawmakers in our parliaments, the teachers in our classrooms, our colleagues in the workplace. Are Luther and the other Reformers not relevant examples for you and me? They did not waver; they were fighting the Lord's battles. Is there not a striking contrast between their God-wrought conviction and courage and our lukewarmness and timidity when it comes to matters of faith and practice? Is there not a striking contrast between their



hope that God would arise to defend and purify His church and the God-doubting defeatism all too common today?

You are reading the *Quarterly Record* of the Trinitarian Bible Society. It is hoped that that means you regard the Bible as the divine fountain of all truth. Before the Reformation, the Bible in the language of the people was not readily available. Wycliffe, Hus, Luther, and all the other Reformers regarded the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God able to make us wise unto salvation (see 2 Timothy 3.15).

The invention of the printing press and the translating work of the Reformers made Bibles available to all. What happened when the people started reading the Word of God? Reading the Scriptures restored the right understandings of God and His Word, of man and his fallen condition, of the way of salvation, and of the way to live on earth. When the Bible began to be read, 'It worked an entire change in society... in the mansions of the great, in the houses of the citizens, and cottages of the peasants. When the Bible began to be read in the families of Christendom, Christendom itself was changed. Then arose other habits, other manners, other conversations, and another life.'<sup>3</sup> Would a return to reading the Bible not work a change in our society? Has reading the Bible worked a change in you?

The Reformers stressed the importance of the Holy Bible. Isn't their emphasis just as relevant today? Many dismiss the truth, power, and value of the Word. Many (perhaps even many of us?) leave the

Bible on the shelf or read short sections only during family devotions. Before the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church refused to recognize the Bible as the rule of faith. For the Reformers, the Bible was their only handbook in all matters of this life and the better one to come. Even though owning and reading a Bible often endangered their lives, they kept on reading

it in secret, even if it had to be by the light of a smoking candle in a dark cellar. Is that emphasis on the importance of the Word of God not relevant to us as well? Is it not just as important today to make the Bible the central and essential element of our lives? While many in our world see the Bible as irrelevant, the Reformers' *sola scriptura* (Scripture alone) remains relevant to us.



*A typical printing press of the period*

The Reformation put the Bible back on the pulpit and encouraged sound preaching of the way of salvation. To the Reformers, God was not far from man. On the contrary, man had distanced himself far from God. To them, the only way to bridge the great gulf between God and man was the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God made manifest in the flesh (see 1 Timothy 3.16). To them, preaching included the whole of Biblical doctrine, both law and gospel. To them, church services were not about making people feel good by shaking hands with their neighbours, listening to shallow sermons and swaying to emotive music. Their preaching strove to answer the core question of human existence: 'How can I, a sinner, be reconciled with God?' Isn't that still a relevant question?

Luther and the Reformers remain relevant because they restored John 3.3 to its rightful place. 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. Luther's thunderstorm experience in 1505 ended the life of this carefree law student; the eternal and holy God touched him and he then knew that he deserved eternal punishment. His praying,

**The Reformation is not a finished history; the need for personal, ecclesiastical, and national reformation continues and will continue until the end of time. We must not just be reformed but reforming; not just commemorating the Reformation but practising it too.**

fasting, going without sleep or sleeping without blankets during bone-chilling winter weather—none of these brought him spiritual peace. He could not become righteous by doing right. God imputed righteousness to Luther, giving him the faith to understand Romans 1.17: 'The just shall live by faith'.

Membership in the church, participation in the sacraments, a strict ascetic lifestyle—none of those could save his soul. None of these can save you or me, either. Faith is not a series of rituals prescribed by a church. Christ merited salvation for His church but personal, God-wrought faith is the only hand by which grace can be accepted. You and I are unlikely to have the same experiences as Martin Luther or any of the Reformers. Nevertheless, we all need to come to some understanding of Ephesians 2.8: 'For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God*'. Restoring that Biblical precept to its

rightful place is perhaps the most relevant legacy of the Reformation.

In conclusion, I suggest that the Reformation is not only a milestone marking the past but a signpost for your future. The Reformation saw Biblical principles—about the way of salvation, marriage and family life, education and the importance of all work—woven

into the daily tapestry of personal life, church worship and society as a whole. The Reformation is not a finished history; the need for personal, ecclesiastical, and national reformation continues and will continue until the end of time. We must not just be reformed but reforming; not just commemorating the Reformation but practising it too.

### Endnotes

1. In 1517 Martin Luther's produced his Ninety-five Theses, in which he argued against certain Roman Catholic practices. These were discussed and Luther wrote further documents calling into question Roman teachings, resulting in his being called to the city of Worms, Germany, where he was to appear before a tribunal. He was found guilty of promoting heresy and excommunicated. Thus the Reformation was underway.

2. W. B. Yeats, 'The Second Coming', in M. L. Rosenthal, *Running to Paradise: Yeats's Poetic Art* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press 1994), p. 211.

3. Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (n.c.: Delmarva Publications, 2013, Googlebooks edition), 1.338.

# Editorial Director's Report

by Philip J. D. Hopkins



## Introduction

In His High Priestly Prayer recorded in the Gospel according to John, the Lord Jesus Christ says ‘Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth’ (John 17.17). We live in a rapidly changing world abounding in error and false teaching. In our day many people seek to improve this fallen world by means of political change, others attempt this immense task by looking to protect the environment, yet others look to false religion or personal gratification. All such endeavours to ‘fix’ our lives and to ‘save’ the earth are doomed to failure. The Bible—as the only sure standard of Truth—points us to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Way, the only Truth and the only Life (cf. John 14.6). There is no more precious and important gift that we can share with our fellow men than the Word of God.

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### □ Retirement of George Anderson

In recent years the Society has been blessed with a number of new staff members. We are thankful for the newer members of staff, but we remain very grateful for those who have worked for the Society for many years. As mentioned in the *Quarterly Record* for July to September 2016, George and Debra Anderson completed twenty-five years of service to the Society on 31 July 2016. This important milestone was soon succeeded by another in George’s life on 12 October 2016, which was also his last working day for the Society before retiring. The Scriptures exhort us to remember all the way that the Lord has led us (cf.

Deuteronomy 8.2), and we would wish to acknowledge the significant contribution that George and Debra have made to the Society’s editorial work over the past twenty-five years. Together they wrote many articles for the Society, oversaw the production of the *Quarterly Record* magazine, and managed many of the Society’s Bible translation and revision projects.

For the last ten years of his labours for the Society, George was primarily engaged in preparing the New Testament section of a Translator’s Manual, an important tool which it is hoped will help guide our Bible translators and revisers in their work. God willing, it is planned that in the

coming months the Translator's Manual will be proofread and checked book by book, and then incrementally uploaded to the Society's Wiki (an internal private website), and in this way made available electronically to those working on our Bible projects. As it is a technical work, it is specifically targeted at workers engaged in the translation and revision of the Scriptures, and thus the Society will not be making it available more widely at this stage. We are thankful that before his retirement, George was able to complete the greater part of his labours on the New Testament portion of the Translator's Manual, and trust that the Lord will bless his arduous endeavours. We prayerfully wish for the Lord's help and blessing to rest upon George in this new phase of his life. George's wife, Debra, continues to be employed by the Society as our Senior Editor, and fulfils an important role in the preparation of the *Quarterly Record*, quality checking incoming Scriptures, editing and proofreading material for publication, answering queries and much more beside!



take him on full-time to expedite work on the Chinese Bible project. In 2014 it was recognised by the Chinese Bible project team that they were having to make so many changes to the Union Version in order to make it accurate and faithful to the Received Text that it was going to be easier and better to prepare a fresh translation. Therefore it was agreed they should undertake a new translation of the Chinese Bible directly from the Biblical languages rather than continuing to revise the Union Version. The Rev. Wang continues to work part-time on the Chinese Bible project alongside the Rev. Zhou. We are very thankful that the Lord has provided these two men to partner together on this vital endeavour.

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### ▣ *The Society's Chinese Bible Project*

One of our major projects is the preparation of a new translation of the Chinese Bible. Long-term readers may be aware that for many years our General Secretary, Paul Rowland, has had a burden to provide the numerous Chinese-speaking peoples with a faithful and accurate translation of the Word of God. He therefore searched for a long while for a Reformed Chinese Christian with a good knowledge of Biblical Hebrew and Greek. Eventually he found the Rev. Paul Wang, who commenced in 2008 to revise the Chinese Union Version. Then in 2012 the Rev. Malachi Zhou was brought to the Society, and in 2013, thanks to the generosity of the Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting (GBS), we were able to

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### ▣ *The 2016 AGM and visit from our Chinese Bible translators*

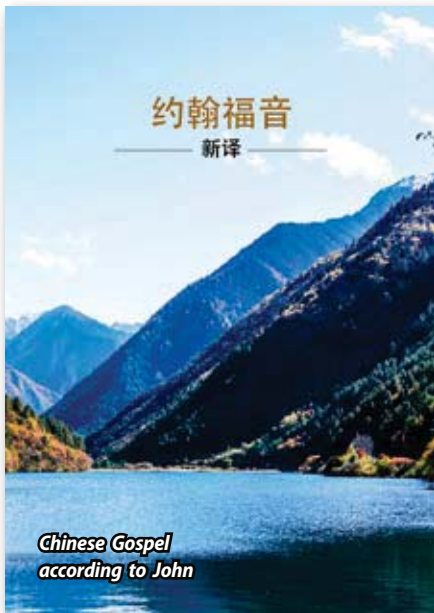
At our 2016 AGM in London, we were delighted that both of our Chinese Bible translators (with the aid of Mr J. Johnson as an interpreter) were able to address members and visitors at our morning business meeting.<sup>1</sup> During the week that followed the translators met together to progress their work and attended meetings with the Society's Editorial Staff. The Rev. Zhou was also able to visit the Netherlands to meet members of the GBS Board. The content that follows draws on the talks



that the Rev. Wang and the Rev. Zhou gave at the 2016 AGM, and we trust it will give further insight into this very significant project.

The Chinese Union Version (CUV) is well known as the standard Bible for the Chinese-speaking Protestant church, and it has been used of God since it was first published in 1919. However, it was translated using the Critical Greek Text. In addition it was prepared using a translation style that placed great emphasis on the literary beauty of the language employed, often at the expense of accuracy to the underlying Biblical texts.

In being based on the Critical Greek Text the CUV omits a number of key verses found in the Received Text (the form of the Koiné Greek Text from which the Reformation-era Bibles in German, Dutch, English, Spanish, Portuguese and many other European languages were translated). In all the Critical Text displays in the order of six thousand differences (largely



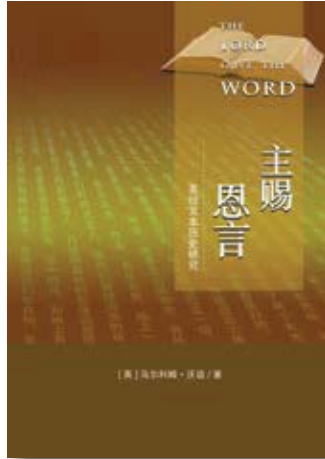
omissions) from the Received Text: this amounts to the equivalent of two hundred verses—roughly equal to the content of 1 and 2 Peter—being left out. Among many other omissions, the CUV does not include the closing part of Matthew 6.13, 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen'. The first part of Luke 23.34, 'Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do' is also missing. Acts 8.37 is one of the complete verses omitted from the CUV, and much of 1 John 5.7–8 is also absent.<sup>2</sup> As the Rev. Zhou very succinctly observed in the Society's AGM business meeting, the Word of God is preserved in the church not in caves. He pointed out that the heavy dependence of some modern Bible scholars on archaeology and humanistic studies to justify their work runs contrary to the Biblical doctrine of the Providential preservation of Holy Scripture. The Society and its supporters believe that God has preserved His own Word through the instrumentality of His church right from the

time that He gave us His Word.

In his talk at the 2016 AGM the Rev. Zhou also remarked that the responsibility of faithfully translating the Bible should be shouldered by God's people. He went on to explain a little of the Society's translation principles, one of which is summarised by the expression 'as literal as is possible and as free as is necessary'.<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Zhou then identified a number of translational problems with the CUV:

■ **Genesis 3.4**, 'Ye shall not surely die' was mistranslated as 'You may not die' in the CUV, thereby watering down the devil's denial of what God had said.

■ **Judges 18.4**, 'And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest'. In the CUV the word 'hire' had been incorrectly translated as a word akin to 'invited', thus losing the important distinction that the priest was Micah's servant and not God's servant.



Chinese The Lord Gave the Word

■ **Acts 16.31**, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house'. The reading in the CUV unambiguously gives the idea that if you as an individual believe, you and your house will be saved; that is, if just one person in a household believes everyone else in the house will also be saved! However, the original text is properly understood as teaching that if a person believes in the Lord they will be saved and if others in their house believe in the Lord they too will be saved.

■ **Romans 8.3**, 'For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh'. The English correctly translates the underlying Greek by expressing the weakness of the law. Although we recognise the flesh is weak, here Paul is referring to the law being weak. However, in this verse the CUV incorrectly states that the flesh is weak.

The Society's translation of the Chinese Bible is the first modern edition to use the Received Text. All of the main current Chinese Bible versions use the Critical Text.

*The picture shows the south-eastern coastal city of Wenzhou which is known by the Chinese as the 'Jerusalem of the east' because of its significant Christian population: more than 1.2 million people would claim to regularly attend a 'Protestant' place of worship.*

(There is a recent translation of the Chinese Bible from the Authorised Version, but this was made without reference to the Biblical Hebrew and Greek and has not gained wide acceptance.) Many modern Chinese versions are also translated according to dynamic equivalence principles, which tend to interpret the meaning of the Biblical language texts rather than translating the words God inspired. Both translators stressed that the Society's edition was being prepared using formal equivalence principles.

It should be added that the Society expects its translators and revisers to believe in both the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture, and thus we expect every word of the original Hebrew and Greek to be taken into account and represented as far as possible in the receptor language. This means that the Society requires even the small Greek word *kai* (primarily meaning 'and', but also translated as 'then', 'but', and 'nevertheless') to be included in the receptor language, even if it is unusual for sentences to begin with 'and' in the receptor language. Our Chinese Bible translators are committed to this principle and take great care to be faithful to the underlying Biblical language texts.

Thus far the Society has published the Chinese Gospel according to John both online and in print. The printed editions of the Gospel have recently become available in a single language format and also as a diglot with the English Authorised Version. To accompany the printing of the Gospel, a Chinese translation of the Society's article *The Lord gave the Word* has also been published; this booklet explains more fully our textual position and our belief in the Providential preservation of God's Word in the Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Received Texts. God willing, it is planned for further printings of these three items to take place in the next few months.

We are also pleased to report that the following books have been translated in first or second draft: Matthew, Mark, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians. The translation team plan next to embark upon the translation of Luke and Acts.

In concluding their respective talks at the Society's AGM, both Chinese translators emphasised the need of prayer for their work. In translating the Word of God these men are in one of the hottest places of the great spiritual battle in which the church and individual Christians are engaged (see Ephesians 6.12). The devil constantly seeks to undermine the potent work of Scripture translation and revision and uses all the means he can to oppose our Bible projects. We would therefore request prayer for our Chinese Bible workers as they labour to prepare a faithful edition of the Scriptures in the world's most-spoken language. 'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have *free* course, and be glorified, even as *it is* with you' (2 Thessalonians 3.1).

## ■ Endnotes

1. If you would like to hear this and other reports from our AGM, they may be found on SermonAudio at [www.sermonaudio.com/tbs](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tbs), or you can request from us a CD recording of the meeting.
2. For more information, please see our articles on textual differences in various passages of Scripture at [www.tbsbibles.org/articles](http://www.tbsbibles.org/articles) under 'Bible passages' and 'Biblical language texts'.
3. This is discussed in our Statement of Doctrine of Holy Scripture and Word List, available at [www.tbsbibles.org/basis/doctrine-of-holy-scripture](http://www.tbsbibles.org/basis/doctrine-of-holy-scripture).

# The Treasury

From **David J. Broome**  
Resources Director



In his second letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul makes a profound statement: 'For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who *is* sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but

as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ' (2 Corinthians 2.15–17). Although Paul is speaking primarily about the gospel ministry here, this passage also has significant application to the work of the Society.

Sadly, there are many in Christendom today who 'corrupt the word of God'. Some simply do not believe the doctrines of the divine inspiration and preservation of the





Scriptures. Others, whilst acknowledging these doctrines, are carried along with the prevailing mood of the times regarding the textual basis and translation method. Still others, who may hold apparently sound views on these matters, do not seem to value the Word of God very highly, placing the traditions of men and their own opinions ahead of the Scriptures in matters of doctrine and practice, in stark contrast to that fundamental doctrine of the Reformation—*sola scriptura* (by Scripture alone).

On the other hand, we trust that it can be humbly said of the work of the Society, which the Lord has maintained faithfully for over 185 years now: ‘but as of sincerity, but as of God’ (2 Corinthians 2.17).

Therefore, the work will inevitably come under the continual assault of Satan, who hates to see the inerrant Word of God being translated and distributed, because he knows, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10.4, that it is one of the ‘weapons of our warfare’ which are ‘mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds’, particularly Satan’s strong holds. The resulting Word will inevitably be ‘a savour of life’ to some and ‘a savour of death’ to others (see 2 Corinthians 2.16).

In considering, then, the effect of the great work that he had been called to, Paul exclaims, ‘And who *is* sufficient for these things?’ (2 Corinthians 2.16). What a comfort and encouragement it is to all who have a prayerful interest in the work of the Trinitarian Bible Society that Paul answers his own question just a few verses on—‘but our sufficiency *is* of God’ (2 Corinthians 3.5). And so it proves for us continually to be—the Lord’s provision for the Society is sufficient, sometimes more than we think we need and sometimes less than we might think we need!

After a time of rebuilding the Society’s

finances through the provision of legacy income and the surplus from the property project, the Lord is once again reminding us that ‘our sufficiency is of God’. As mentioned in the last *Quarterly Record*, the present financial situation is very challenging, with very limited known legacy income, significant extra costs due to adverse foreign exchange movements following the recent EU referendum, and one of our key funding partners facing financial challenges of their own. The projected General Fund deficit in 2016 is £538,000, which is a shortfall of some £384,000 more than the budgeted level. We currently expect to have a General Fund cash deficit of around £220,000 at the end of December 2016.

The Society is not about to run out of cash, as seemed likely earlier in the decade, because we have relatively healthy levels of Restricted Funds (money given for specific translation projects or grants) which can be used for cash-flow purposes in the short to medium term before it is needed its intended purpose. However, the Society’s General Fund does need to be rebuilt in order that these Restricted Funds can be released. The General Committee have had to make some difficult decisions in order to achieve even a balanced budget for 2017, so it is likely, for example, that there will have to be significant reductions to the funds which the Society’s General Fund puts into Railway Posters and General Grants next year. We covet your prayers that the Lord would provide much wisdom in these most difficult matters and make known that sufficiency which He has promised.

The Lord provided a wonderful sufficiency in our new building, William Tyndale House, where we have now been for over a year and which is proving a great blessing. Additionally, God has proved His sufficiency in providing the Society with



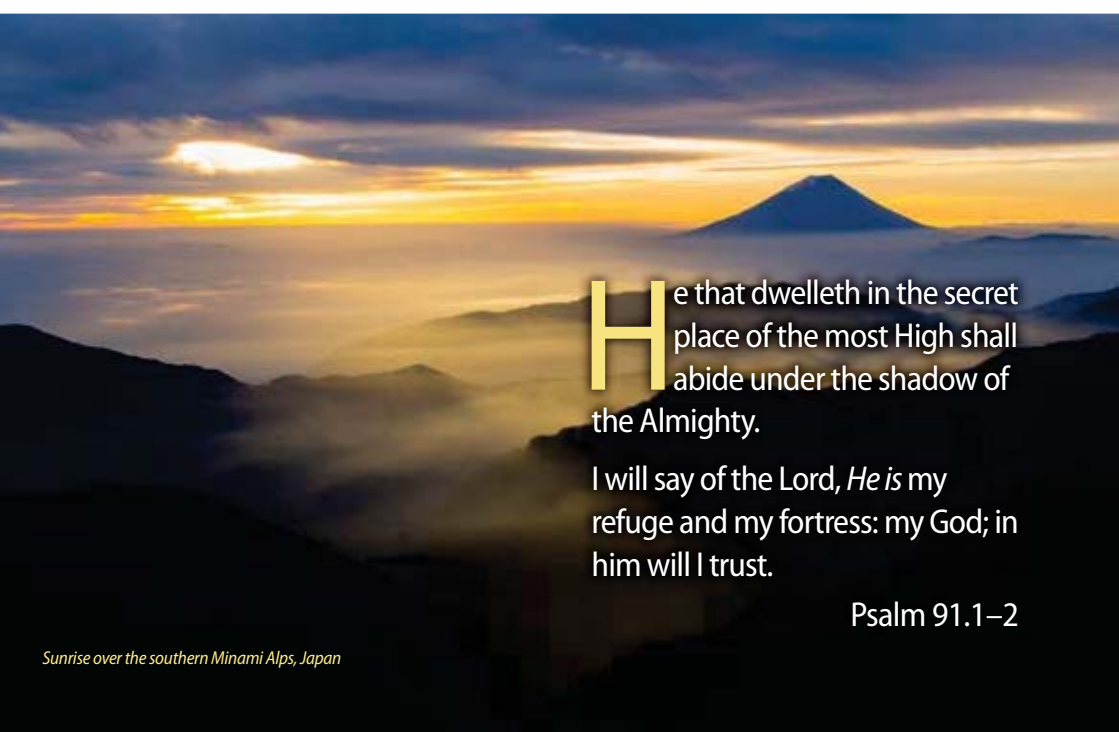
## Trinitarian Bible Society – Quarterly Record

capable staff to take the work forward. The latest addition is Miss Hannah Woodhams, who hopes to take up her post as a Sales & Grants Officer at the start of the new year, replacing Mrs Nicole Omotayo, who moved to pastures new in the summer.

Thinking of our staff particularly, perhaps the greatest felt need of many involved in the work of the Society is that of grace. We think of our translators and revisers, who carry such a great responsibility, often labouring in very isolated situations with little Christian fellowship, working long hours and undertaking such meticulous work. We remember our Deputation Speakers and General Secretary, who travel countless thousands of miles and take many meetings in the service of the Society. And there are others, of course, too numerous to name, who contribute in their way. We are thankful for that wondrous promise given to the Apostle

Paul in answer to his request for the removal of 'the messenger of Satan' that buffeted him: 'My grace is sufficient for thee' (2 Corinthians 12.7, 9). Brethren, pray for us!

We remain deeply thankful to all our members, supporters and friends for their partnership with us in this work, practically, financially, and especially in prayer. We gratefully acknowledge receipt of anonymous gifts totalling £11,676.38 for the period July to September 2016 (Matthew 6.4). This includes £2,376.69 collected at our Annual General Meeting in London, a donation of £6,000 from a supporter who always requests his donations be treated as anonymous, and £79.04 given through 'Give as you Live' — an online giving platform whereby you can give to a charity of your choice whilst buying online ([www.giveasyoulive.com](http://www.giveasyoulive.com)).



**H**e that dwelleth in the secret  
place of the most High shall  
abide under the shadow of  
the Almighty.

I will say of the Lord, *He is my*  
refuge and my fortress: my God; in  
him will I trust.

Psalm 91.1–2

# THE PRECIOUS WORD OF GOD

THE ANNUAL SERMON PREACHED BY  
THE REV. M. H. WATTS  
*at the 185th Annual General Meeting of the Society,  
17 September 2016*

And Samuel grew,  
and the LORD was with him,  
and did let none of his words fall to the ground.  
(1 Samuel 3.19)

The first book of Samuel continues the account of the history of Israel from the time of the Judges to the time of the Kings. The first seven chapters of the book are devoted to the last of the judges, Samuel. He was born, we believe, somewhere round about 1100 BC in Ramathaim-zophim or Ramah, in the hill country of Ephraim, central Palestine. His mother, Hannah, was married to Elkanah. She vowed that if God would give her a child, she would dedicate that child to Him and set him apart as a Nazarite. She did conceive and bore a son, Samuel, and, at the time of weaning, when Samuel was two or three years old, he was taken to the

Tabernacle at Shiloh and committed to the care of Eli, the High Priest. Thereafter he was engaged in the worship of God and, most probably, in the study of the Holy Scriptures.

The spiritual state of the nation was very poor at this time. The first verse of 1 Samuel 3 says, 'the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was* no open vision.' That word 'precious' can mean 'rare', and of course what is rare is often, if not always, precious. The reason for this scarcity of God's Word is given: '*there was* no open vision', which means that God was not communicating His Truth to any holy person or prophet. In Numbers 12.6

we read, 'If there be a prophet among you, *I* the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, *and* will speak unto him in a dream.' This explains the reference to 'no open vision': at this time there were no communications from heaven, neither was revelation through this medium available to the general public. There was 'no open vision'.

One cannot help but think how similar are the days in which we live, given the present lamentable absence of the Word of God. Although we are thankful for faithful ministers and churches today, it is true nevertheless that, in many places, God's Word is scarce. And the Scripture does speak of times when there is a great lack of the true preaching and hearing of the Truth. Amos 8.11 speaks of days when there is 'a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD'. Surely, this is one of the greatest afflictions and miseries to be experienced.

Why is the Word of God so rare? Well, the very sad fact is that in many places in this world there is no pure Scripture available. We cannot imagine a darker place than a land that does not possess the Word of God in its own language. In such a land the Word of God is indeed rare. In other places Bibles may be found, but they are not accurate and faithful versions. They have not been translated from the traditional texts—the Hebrew Masoretic Text and the Greek Received Text. Nor are these Bibles translated according to formal equivalence, taking into account every inspired word of God. Instead dynamic equivalence is the preferred method of translation, thus giving only the general sense of Scripture and rendering this in the language of men. The Word of God in its purity and essential authenticity is rare, on account of the many

false versions of the Holy Scripture made available on the market today.

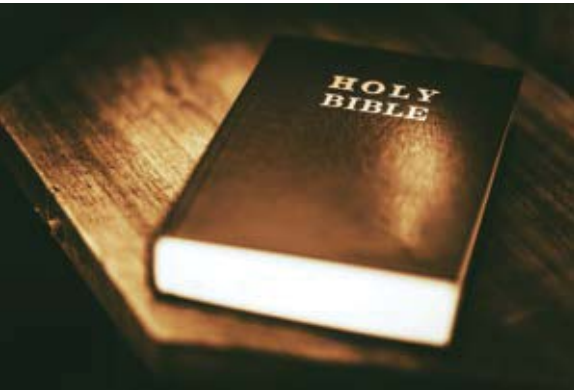
There are other reasons why God's Word is rare. It appears men are not being called to the ministry as once they were. This calling, of course, is an act of divine sovereignty; and God seems not to be issuing His call, quite probably on account of the state of the visible church. Hence, there is a general absence of any reference to a call to the ministry, few experiencing God's hand upon them, compelling them to go and preach the gospel. As the Apostle Paul said, 'necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!' (1 Corinthians 9.16). The ministry seems not to be recognised today as once it was and the call to the ministry is almost unknown.

Again, the Word is scarce in our day because there seems to be disfavour towards the whole idea of preaching; churches are often regarded as centres of entertainment. Ministers are tasked with the duty of making their congregation happy. Thus, preaching is reduced to the lowest level: the Word of God preached with gravity, as well as in passion and fervour, is altogether unfamiliar to the modern church.

In addition to this, what is being preached often falls short of what should be preached. Sometimes the content of sermons is little more than dry morality, as if our faith is taken up with precepts and commandments. These things, without doubt, have their place, but not at the expense of gospel preaching. It is tragic when Christ is not preached, when atonement by blood is not emphasised, and when the full remission of sin upon repentance and faith is not impressed upon men's hearts.

I would add a further reason for the present evident scarcity of the Word. Years

ago, as some will remember, preaching was with great power because there was an unmistakable unction upon it. Now, the power seems gone and the unction withdrawn. The effect is for all to observe: the Word of God is not possessing minds, it is not moving hearts, and it is not turning wills. Sermons are being preached, but the Word of God is not being received.



It must also be said, and with sadness and regret, that in some circles every effort has been made to remove God's Word from its rightful place. Early nonconformist churches believed that the Bible should be central in public worship, a belief recognised and expressed even in the architecture of the building. The pulpit was dominant in its position. The modern church has somehow lost this fundamental principle. The pulpit has been replaced with the platform or stage. Preaching, if it takes place at all, is relegated to an inferior place in services; it has to be without serious doctrinal content and shorter than in past years. Why? We are told it is because outsiders—and even church-goers—are unable to concentrate for more than about fifteen minutes. Thus teaching is being reduced and curtailed, to the point that God's Word has now become exceedingly scarce.

Add to this the fact that in these days good, sound and faithful ministers are often subject to unworthy criticism and fearful attack. Some professing to be the Lord's people no longer have respect for the ministerial office and, all too readily, they reject serious, sober and in-depth preaching. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that today, among some, there appears to be a revolt against Godly ministers. Where is the recognition of God and His servants? Not a few good men have suffered this and have been turned out of their churches. Isn't this yet another reason why the Word of God, in our day, is becoming increasingly rare?

One final point here: God's Word is rare because, on account of the church's state, divine judgment has overtaken us. So sinful, worldly and compromised is the church that God has been provoked and has left the church to the consequences of turning away from Him. 'The time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God' (1 Peter 4.17). It is a judgment, no less, that God's Word, in its glory, comfort, and wonder-working power, is so tragically rare in the land at the present time.

## SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

In Samuel's day, no doubt the faithful in the land mourned over the scarcity of God's holy Word and no doubt they prayed, as the remnant of faithful people always do in such circumstances. Deeply concerned for the state of the nation, they would have attended the means of grace, seeking the divine favour with one heart and soul that this choice and priceless blessing might be restored to their generation, that God might be pleased once again to communicate to men, raise up

preachers of His Truth, endue them with His Spirit, and give once again His blessed Word with convicting, converting and comforting power, to thousands of needy, perishing souls.

In young Samuel—the first in a line of prophets (Acts 3.24)—they would have seen, perhaps, the beginning of an answer to their many prayers. The first book of Samuel 3.19 says, ‘And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground’.

We are told in this text that ‘Samuel grew’. At first sight that seems to be simply a reference to growth in years or to growth in stature; but Dr Jamieson is surely right to comment thus: ‘he advanced not only in age and physical stature, but in the acquirements of wisdom and piety; and the spiritual gifts with which he was so eminently endowed, showing as they did that he enjoyed the favour and blessing of God, secured him in consequence great influence with the people’.<sup>1</sup>

In support of this more general way of understanding the words, we should note, **first of all**, that the whole chapter is concerned with Samuel’s spiritual life, particularly with his early call into God’s service; **secondly**, that in this particular verse the focus is very much upon the spiritual—the felt presence of God and the spiritual efficacy of His Word; **thirdly**, that elsewhere in Scripture similar words certainly include the idea of a Godly increase and progress, as, for example, in the Gospels where it is written that John the Baptist ‘grew, and waxed strong in spirit’ (Luke 1.80) and the Lord Jesus Himself is said to have ‘increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man’ (Luke 2.52); **fourthly**, the words are meant to show how this young boy became a highly esteemed ‘man of God’ from the northern border to the

southern border of Israel; and **fifthly**, it was in his spiritual growth and attainment that Samuel fulfilled the aspirations of his Godly mother and the hopes of his Godly people.

In order to effect a profound change in people’s hearts and lives, God placed His hand upon a man who was advanced in knowledge and experience. How necessary is this to the recovery of blessing in His church!

‘And Samuel grew’. Spiritual development is of paramount importance if anyone is to make a difference in his day or generation. In Psalm 92.13–14 we read of God’s purpose for the righteous that, ‘planted in the house of the LORD’, he shall ‘flourish’ there and ‘still bring forth fruit in old age’ (cf. Ephesians 4.11–16). This, then, is His will; it is also His express command. He tells His people to ‘grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour...’ (2 Peter 3.18; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4.1–2; Hebrews 6.1). Growth in grace is growth in the apprehension, possession and enjoyment of His love (cf. Romans 5.5; 2 Thessalonians 3.5; Ephesians 3.17–19). Also, more particularly here, this is growth in this love’s manifestation and evidence: in many and various endowments, qualities and virtues—for example, in the fear of God and faith (cf. Psalm 86.11; 2 Corinthians 10.15). Even so, His people are able to glorify Him, as taught in the words which follow: ‘To him *be* glory both now and for ever’ (2 Peter 3.18; cf. John 15.5, 8; Philippians 1.9–11).

‘And Samuel grew’. He grew in the experimental knowledge of God, the knowledge which affects the heart. To use the words of Hosea 6.3, ‘then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD’. At first, you see, Samuel’s knowledge would have been quite basic, but, touched by the Holy Spirit, he could never be satisfied with that; he



wanted more of God—a greater awareness of Him and a sweeter communion with Him. He sought and found God as the greatest reality of his life.

‘And Samuel grew.’ A further sphere of his growth was in experience. Laban, Abraham’s relative, once said, ‘I have learned by experience...’ (Genesis 30.27), meaning that over a number of years he had observed God’s special, superintending providence, and he had concluded that it was really on account of Jacob that he himself had been blessed. It is surely our duty to take careful notice of God’s dealings with us (cf. Psalm 107.43; 111.2) because, discerning them, we shall be the more persuaded of His guardian-care in the present, His great faithfulness in the past, and His complete trustworthiness in the future.

‘And Samuel grew.’ He was richly blessed, more and more. His God was all-sufficient, with so much goodness in Himself that He delights to bestow it upon His people (cf. Psalm 119.68; Philippians 4.19; James 1.5). Truly, He ‘loadeth us *with benefits*’ (Psalm 68.19); He is ‘able to make all grace abound’ (2 Corinthians 9.8); and, according to His Word, He is ‘able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think’ (Ephesians 3.20).

‘And Samuel grew.’ It follows that he also grew in usefulness. Scripture likens us to different utensils or vessels in the house of God. Sanctified by His Spirit, we can become serviceable or useful to the Lord—‘meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work’ (2 Timothy 2.21). That was what happened to Samuel. He became increasingly fit for the Lord’s use, both in the nation and in the church of the people of God. And, in our hearts, there should be the strongest of desires to be consecrated to the service of God,

‘always abounding in the work of the Lord’ (1 Corinthians 15.58).

When first called by grace, God’s work in our hearts and lives has only just commenced: hence there is great room for improvement and enlargement. We are His workmanship, it is true, but He has only just begun a good work in us, which He must ‘perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ’ (Philippians 1.6). There is so much to be done in us, so much to wean us away from in this world, so much to render us more Godlike, so much to prepare us for the heavenly and everlasting Kingdom. True, we grow according to blessing, but blessing is never uniform. God is sovereign in its bestowal. That is why some believers in the church are as ‘little children’, others as ‘young men’ and still others as ‘fathers’ (1 John 2.13–14).

While there may be times of rapid progress, there may come times of declension and deterioration (cf. Galatians 5.7; Revelation 2.4; 3.17). If those latter times come, we must look to it, repent of our backslidings, and seek God’s mercy for pardon and His grace for recovery (cf. 1 Kings 8.38; Psalm 51.1; Hebrews 4.16). The promise is: ‘Return, ye backsliding children, *and* I will heal your backslidings’ (Jeremiah 3.22; cf. Psalm 23.3).

With strong determination (cf. Joshua 24.15; Philippians 3.13), notwithstanding the world, the flesh and the devil, we must advance in holiness (cf. 2 Corinthians 7.1; Hebrews 12.1), endeavouring to endure to the end (cf. Job 17.9; Matthew 10.22), so as to be the best at the last (cf. Matthew 24.46; Acts 20.24; 2 Peter 3.14).

Samuel’s spiritual growth was observed. He reached a high degree of maturity: and it must have been wonderful to see, for as Thomas Brooks once wrote, ‘the tallest oak was once an acorn!’<sup>2</sup> He became able

to speak with Eli about deep and profound things, the mysteries of providence and the workings of the Spirit. He became increasingly mature in belief, in doctrine and in heart-religion. He became universally respected and people throughout Israel sought out his teaching and counsel. He found 'life, righteousness, and honour' (Proverbs 21.21).

Only the Holy Spirit can effect this. He descends upon the soul like water upon dry, parched and desolate land, and under His gracious influences and life-giving powers there inevitably appears new life, blossoms of promise, and fruits of righteousness (cf. Isaiah 32.15; 41.18; 43.19; 44.3). The Spirit was upon Samuel. That was the secret of His power and strength. That was how he became a great man of God.

Knowing the work of God in his soul, he doubtless realised that God was at work in him, and this must have brought real assurance to his heart. Now there is an assurance of faith, based on the sure promises; and there is an assurance of sense, arising from spiritual experience, as we are graciously enabled to recognise within ourselves definite marks of grace. When Samuel examined himself, he must have detected in himself a sign of life because there was clear evidence of growth.

What God did in him was not just for himself, however, but for the people who constituted God's church in his day and beyond. Samuel grew spiritually; it was in this way that he became a faithful minister of the Word of God. As he grew, he felt a greater love for the souls of others, a greater knowledge to impart, and a greater ability to preach effectively. This brought great blessing to the people of his day: 'And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel *was* established to be a prophet of the LORD' (1 Samuel 3.20).

Grieving together, as we do, over the state of the church and nation of our day, it is impressed deeply upon our hearts that there is no hope unless God appears for us and, in His mighty power, brings about spiritual recovery and transformation. Will He do this? Will He introduce a new era of grace? Will He grant another revival and reformation? We cannot read His secret decrees, but when He raises up a man, or indeed men, like Samuel, there is surely hope, and perhaps much more than hope—an earnest and pledge of greater and fuller blessing.

Dear brethren in the ministry, emulate this man of God, Samuel, because it will take such a gracious and mature man, with understanding, insight, truth, power, and zeal to do, under God, a work in souls and churches which will answer prayers, fulfil promises and realise hopes. If Samuel's ministry marked a turning-point in Israel's history, what if God raised up, in this our day, a great company of such men, whose preaching would be abundantly and lastingly blessed?

Well might we pray: O God, make us men of the Word and Spirit; and then, in Thy great mercy, let Thy Kingdom come!

## SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

**W**e read further into our text: 'And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him' (1 Samuel 3.19).

This points to a very precious experience: the discovery of God to his soul. It was said to the patriarch, Abraham, 'God *is* with thee in all that thou doest' (Genesis 21.22). The Lord Himself said to Jacob, 'behold, I *am* with thee' (Genesis 28.15). Later, Scripture says, 'The LORD was with Joseph' (Genesis 39.2). This is an amazing

privilege of grace, especially when we recall Solomon's words—'But will God indeed dwell on the earth?' He continued, 'behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee' (1 Kings 8.27); and given God's evident infinitude, is it not altogether wonderful that He should stoop down so low as to befriend and visit one of the children of men (cf. Psalm 113.5–6)! Yet that is what we read here. God so great, and yet so good—humbling Himself to draw near and to be with Samuel. This met the young man's need. It filled his empty heart and was such a blessing to his soul. 'And the LORD was with him.'

We need to be sure of what is meant by these words. A distinction should be made between God's general presence and His special presence. There is, of course, a sense in which God is everywhere. 'Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?' (Jeremiah 23.23; cf. Psalm 139.7–10). But we must recognise that, in a way unknown to the world, He can be, in kindness and familiarity, specially with His own beloved people. When Moses said to God, 'If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence' (Exodus 33.15), he was not expressing a defective understanding of the divine omnipresence. No; what Moses desired was something more. He wanted God to be with him as the closest of companions, with him in His grace, affording him favour, comfort and help, and with him in a manner both spiritually felt and spiritually enjoyed. This, no less, is promised to us in the Covenant of Grace, when God says to, and of, His own, 'I will be their God...I will not turn away from them, to do them good' (Jeremiah 32.38, 40).

This is His secret which He will only share with His dear people, as our Lord Himself intimated when He said of the Spirit, the Comforter, 'the world cannot receive

[Him], because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you' (John 14.17). That is the special presence we need.

We may love to read our books, but they must always be a means to an end. They are not an end in and of themselves; they are meant to lead us into the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty. Believe it for your souls' good: there are such precious times in life when God seems strangely and most wonderfully near, so near in fact that He can almost be touched, and so near that we feel we have passed beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies. What does Scripture say? 'He will draw nigh to you' (James 4.8).

In his last letter, the Apostle Paul wrote of his presence at the preliminary hearing to his trial. He stood before his callous and cruel judge, and he stood alone, deserted by all his companions. But what an experience was his! In his own words, 'the Lord stood with me' (2 Timothy 4.17). Here, Paul is touching the very nerve of what I am trying to describe. 'The Lord stood with me', and, in the absence of others, he knew the One Who was with him.

Well may we say with the psalmist, 'O when wilt thou come unto me?' (Psalm 101.2). Perhaps we know something of God's presence already, but it is possible to know more. Moses, for example, enjoyed many encounters with God, but that did not prevent him from making the request: 'I beseech thee, shew my thy glory' (Exodus 33.18). God shines upon us like the sun, with ever-increasing light. He appears as a cloud, spreading across our sky. He flows as a river, to greater and greater fullness. All these are Biblical figures suggesting that with God there is always more to come.

Whatever our experience of God may be, we may rest assured that there is nothing quite like it. The great privilege of His people (cf. Job 7.17–18), the sweetener for our bitter sorrows (cf. Psalm 73.13–23), and the earnest and pledge of glory to come (cf. Ephesians 1.13–14): each and every one of us should not be satisfied in life with anything less than God Himself.

A prophet like Samuel needed God, even as every minister today needs Him (Acts 11.21; 18.9–10).

This felt presence allows for communion or sharing. He shares with us, through the ministry of His Spirit, the love of His heart, His wise counsel, and His enabling power, while we share with Him all our needs, sorrows and desires. At times, a man of God can be brought very low but, pouring out his troubles and concerns to God, he finds that God pours sweet comforts into his soul—‘I, *even I, am* he that comforteth you’ (Isaiah 51.12). And believe me when I say that this comfort is like no other; and it not only restores us but it revives us. His presence imparts life to a failing spirit and renewed authority and power to a failing ministry. Our God is the God of revival; and if God makes His presence known, transforming effects will inevitably follow.

Therein lay one of the great secrets of Samuel’s life, power and usefulness: ‘the Lord was with him’.

A young minister was once appointed to preach along with John Brown of Haddington. Apparently, the former delivered his sermon in a very eloquent and florid style, but Brown preached plainly and with earnestness. David Hume, the famous historian and philosopher, was present, and it is said that, after hearing the two men, he discerningly remarked to others in attendance: ‘The first preacher

spoke as if he did not believe what he said; the latter as if he were conscious that the Son of God stood at his elbow.’<sup>3</sup>

If on the Sabbath we who are ministers stood in our pulpits feeling that God was there with us, it would surely change everything: it would greatly humble us, it would make us most serious, it would move us to emphasise ‘the main things’, but above all it would constrain us passionately and fervently to preach the glorious gospel of Christ. God’s presence with us would produce authority of utterance, solemn warnings and moving entreaties; and no doubt our several congregations would be profoundly affected, perhaps with many wholeheartedly seeking the Lord.

The blessing is not, however, just for ministers. Believers in general, facing challenges, problems and trials, need more than anything else to know this signal, blessed presence. It alone will maintain them in the faith, strengthen and exercise their graces, enable them to endure adversity, suppress their doubts and fears, and grant them victory over the devil and his temptations. Knowing Emmanuel—God with us, the One who will never fail us—we shall be able to hold on our way and be faithful to the end, proving His power ever to bless and to keep. And even though we come at last to severe affliction, perhaps even death, our God—‘a very present help in trouble’ (Psalm 46.1)—will speak tenderly but assuringly to us, saying, ‘when thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee... they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned’ (Isaiah 43.2).

This is the discovery and enjoyment of the saints: God is with us on earth, and then, afterwards, we are with Him in heaven.

Returning to Samuel, we note once again that ‘the LORD was with him.’ Who can deny that ministers need this experience? Surely the present state of things in our churches impresses upon us that there should be less emphasis on deep theological research, originality of thought and expression, and highly polished, memorable sermons, and more emphasis on seeking, finding and knowing God in the pulpit and in the pew. After all, this is what makes the difference ultimately. This is what turns the tide and changes the darkness of night into the light of a new dawn and another day. ‘The LORD was with him.’ May the Lord be with us!

## SPIRITUAL SERVICE

Spiritual development—‘and Samuel grew’; spiritual fellowship—‘and the Lord was with him’; and now ‘spiritual service’—‘and did let none of his words fall to the ground.’ I call it spiritual service because Samuel served the Lord in ministering His Word to the souls of men and women. In this, we are told, he did not fail—his preaching did not fail—the Lord ‘let none of his words fall to the ground.’ Here the word ‘fall’ means the same as ‘fail’. Many commentators think there may be an allusion here to an arrow which proceeds from a bow yet falls short of its target. This can certainly happen. The Word preached just does not reach minds and hearts; instead it appears to fail. But, through grace, it is not always like that. A sermon can fly straight to the soul, bringing conviction of sin and misery, enlightening in the knowledge of the Lord, and persuading sinners to receive Him to their comfort, satisfaction and everlasting life.

It was so with Samuel. The Lord ‘let none of his words fall to the ground.’ Now what exactly is implied by this?

**First of all**, it means that the Word was so declared as to give evidence of its absolute veracity, and therefore hearers, discerning ‘the ring of truth’, concluded it was indeed God’s Word to which they should positively respond. In this they were like the Thessalonians later on, to whom the apostle wrote: ‘Ye received [the Word] not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God’ (1 Thessalonians 2.13).

**Secondly**, his declaration was clothed with the Holy Spirit and with great power, so that the force of truth was deeply felt, spiritual impressions being made. This was ‘preaching...in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,’ which means, preaching clearly evidencing the presence and power of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2.4).

**Thirdly**, the preaching reached the hearts of men and women, deeply affecting them and stirring in them the strongest of emotions. It was just as it was on the Day of Pentecost: ‘now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?’ (Acts 2.37).

**Fourthly**, his message brought to people clear understanding of their dreadful sin and God’s wonderful mercy. Thus they were moved to cry out, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’ (Luke 18.13; cf. 1 Corinthians 14.24–25).

**Fifthly**, the truth brought blessing to many: hearts were changed and lives were redirected, as under God’s good hand ‘a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord’ (Acts 11.21).

**Sixthly**, the doctrine revealed and proclaimed was kept in the memory and often reflected upon, to even greater comfort. As the inspired apostle wrote, ‘we ought to give the more earnest heed to



the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip' (Hebrews 2.1)—'slip': flow out or pass away, as Dr John Owen renders the word.<sup>4</sup>

**Seventhly**, and **lastly**, the ministry not only brought blessing to the souls hearing it, but, through them, brought blessing to others, even as it did in New Testament times when Levi, called by the Lord, invited his friends to hear Him (Luke 5.27–29) and the woman of Samaria, after hearing Christ, went to tell her neighbours about Him (John 4.28–29). We might also think of the Thessalonians who received the gospel only to make it known throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1.4–8).

Oh that today the gospel might be successful, for the glory of God and the good of never-dying souls! We long that it might be so. We so much want God to convert the lost, to snatch them from the burning, and to bring them in before the door is shut. We express what we hope is our souls' sincere desire, that God will so bless His Word that sinners shall find life before death. Believe it, dear friends, God can do it, and 'let none of his words fall to the ground'.

Do please read the next verse. So blessed was Samuel's preaching that 'all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD'. Do you see the significance of this? It marks a dramatic transformation. At the beginning of the chapter the Word of the Lord was rare, there being 'no open vision'. But, working through Samuel, God had changed that, so that eventually the whole territory of Israel, from its most northern to its most southern extremity—a distance of about one hundred and

fifty miles—received the richest of blessings by the remarkable spread of God's holy, powerful and life-giving Word.

Spiritual development—'And Samuel grew'; spiritual fellowship—'and the LORD was with him'; and spiritual service—and the Lord 'did let none of his words fall to the ground': God makes us the people we should be, grants us His presence continually, and then blesses our witness to the Truth, to the salvation of sinners and to the praise of the glory of His grace.

The day will surely come when through faithful preaching, 'the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2.14). This is the hope within our hearts. It is the prayer often upon our lips. May it soon be our blessed experience and the experience of the church throughout the world! Amen.

## Footnotes

1. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, PA, USA: J. B. Lippincott & Co., n.d.), 2.142.
2. Alexander B. Grosart, ed., *The Complete Works of Thomas Brooks*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh, Scotland: James Nichol, 1866), 3.63.
3. Robert Mackenzie, *John Brown of Haddington* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918), p. 100.
4. John Owen, *Owen's Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 7 vols. (London, England: Thomas Tegg, 1840), 2.229

# The Word of God Among All Nations



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.



## Europe



### From a prison in England

Just to say thank you for the calendars you sent to our Chaplaincy. They will be put to good use! Blessings on your work.



Posters in Vauxhall and Liverpool Stations

### From London, England

I took this photo of the Mark poster at Vauxhall Station on my way home from work. The 1 John poster photo was taken in Liverpool.



## The Americas



### From St-Laurent du Maroni, Guyana

I am following your translation work with great interest, since 2015. I wanted to ask you, when you think you can provide the Francophone world 'new Bible'? I greatly appreciate the Gospel of Matthew in French. The text is easy to read and purity of Scripture has been preserved. Be blessed in Christ.



### From Brazil

Evangelism in hospitals in Brasil, Team Evangelism. God bless all your ministry.



Distributing Portuguese Scriptures



### From Costa Rica

We met in Costa Rica, in your promotional Reina Valera New Testament Conference. We enjoyed and appreciated a lot of the speeches that Saturday. I have studied Greek in a missionary institute in Guadalupe (San José) for more than 14 years and Hebrew for 28 years in a Christian institute in Costa Rica. I saw your Hebrew/Greek Bible in one volume. I appreciate your invitation to write unto you to ask this book. I hope to go to Morocco one day like a missionary between the Muslim Berbers of High Atlas Mountains.



[a few weeks later]: Today, I have received the Tanakh and Kainos Diatheke in one volume. I am a very very very happy man! Thank you for this precious treasure! Wonderful!!!!!! Praise the Lord and He will bless your beautiful and noble ministry even more!!!!!!



### From Greenville, SC, USA

Our church presented my sister and me with the news of your Sabbath School Scripture Learning Contest. We studied and recited all the passages and we were awarded Bibles. We wanted to write you to say thank you for this ministry to us. Our Bibles are all the more special to us because we earned them.

### From Miami, FL, USA

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am currently serving a twenty-five year sentence in prison. I would truly

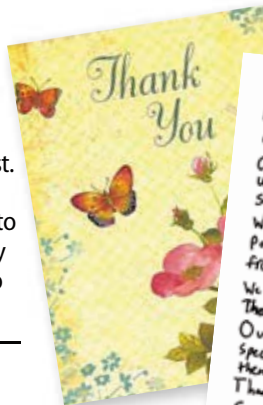
appreciate it if you would please send me a pocket sized KJV Bible. I'm presently participating in a faith program and your Bible would be a great asset to learning God's Word. Thank you for being out there for us behind this wire.

### From Florida, USA

I am a prisoner and have received my pocket size Bible (KJV) October 6, 2016. I am writing to thank you and to let you know that it is greatly appreciated. Thank you and God bless always. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all forever more.

### From Okeechobee, FL, USA

I have carried and used one of your compact King James Bibles for the past eight years. It was given to me slightly used, but nevertheless it has been a blessing to me. I am incarcerated in Florida since 2005, and about a year before that, while in county jail awaiting trial, the Lord opened my heart and I received His Son Jesus as Lord and personal Saviour. The point of this letter is that the compact Bible I have carried these past eight years has been a tremendous blessing to me, due to the fact that in order to attend services I must walk back and forth to the chapel in



**Thank you from young supporters**

all types of weather and it has been easy to carry because it fits well in my pockets. My problem is that it has finally worn out due to much use, and the covers came off about six month ago, the first five chapters of Genesis are missing, and other pages are coming loose. I have no money or source of income, no outside family support, and no way to replace my Bible. If it is still possible, I would be greatly blessed if you could send me a new compact King James Bible. It would be greatly appreciated and certainly put to good use. May the Lord continue to bless you and your ministry.



## Africa



### From a British mission to Zimbabwe

*[The following is a report from the Free Grace Evangelistic Association on their distribution of our Ndebele Bibles. These were translated by the Society under the auspices of the Zimbabwean Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The first printing in 2012, of 26,000 copies, was distributed by the church; a further printing of 25,000 in 2016 was produced to meet the continuing demand for this Bibles. This report was provided by the regional director of the association for central and southern Africa.]*

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. To Him be all the honour and glory for causing us always to triumph through His name. Amen. 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God' (2 Corinthians 3:5).

It was with much desire to visit the brethren in Zimbabwe that I left home on Monday 3 October 2016 for Bulawayo. My visit had been arranged that I go and witness the launch and distribution of the Ndebele Bible in Matabeleland on behalf of Free

Grace Evangelistic Association (FGEA) UK and Trinitarian Bible Society (TBS). I travelled to Lusaka and got a Gweru-bound bus which leaves Lusaka at 12.30pm. As the bus was leaving the terminus, the bus crew made announcements through the microphone, and lastly said, 'We have a pastor on board'. Then he said, 'Please come and pray for us as we start our journey.' I walked to the front of the bus and prayed through the microphone. I counted this as of God's mercies for our journey. We left Lusaka at 1.00pm. This meant we would get to Gweru late at night. A pastor had made arrangements with one of the elders from their church to host me for a night. The bus arrived in Gweru 15 minutes after midnight. Immediately I sent a text to my host that I had arrived. The elder came to welcome me and took me to his home where I spent the remaining hours of the night.

After spending some time in the morning with my host, I left for Bulawayo to join the team. Upon arrival, I was welcomed by one of the zone committee members and later we went to join the team which was having a briefing. After exhausting the logistics business, the meeting was called to a close and they offered me to pray the closing prayer. I carried a box of 200 copies of the English booklet 'Which Bible Version: does it really matter?' with me from Zambia which the

pastor had requested for distribution. I handed over the books to him, who also handed them over to the zone leadership. This was meant to be







*The church in Gwanda*

part of the distribution alongside the Ndebele Bible.

On 5 October we gathered early in the morning to start our first program on my visit schedule.

We met with

one of the Ndebele Bible translators, who was accompanying us for the program. It was such a blessing to meet with him and travel together for ministry. He talked about what necessitated the translation of the version of the Bible now being distributed. He also mentioned some challenges encountered during the translation period, such as interruption of electricity supply and computers being stolen while they were attending church service on the Lord's Day. He came driving a Morris 1959 model. It was quite refreshing to have this car in sight. It was like 'The Old is Better'.

The brethren loaded 95 carton boxes containing Bibles in two separate vehicles for the Ndebele Bible launch and distribution in Gwanda and Esibomvu in south Matabeleland. After all the logistics were done, we started off for Gwanda. We got there a bit late for the program. We found ministers had already gathered at the church and just waiting for us to arrive. Gwanda is a provincial capital for Matabeleland south. Several ministers from different churches and denominations and invited guests had gathered for the launch of Ndebele Bible distribution, which included 2 chaplains from the police and prisons, representatives from the municipal council and district hospital. Sixty boxes, each box containing 12 Bibles, were allocated for Gwanda.

The FGEA team took turns in ministering. They taught on Bible versions, highlighting the most important parts of Scripture which are under attack. This they did using the TBS booklet 'Which Bible Version: does it really matter?' I spoke on the subject, 'Remaining Faithful to the Word of God', the text being John 1.1–5. The Word is foundational in all that we are and do. The main emphasis was the importance of the Word in our lives and ministry, and our call to remain faithful in this corrupt generation. The TBS translator



*Joyfully receiving Bibles and booklets*

also had a good time explaining what necessitated the new translation of the Ndebele Bible from the Biblical languages, the challenges during the work and the beauty of having a faithful translation of the Bible in Ndebele. The distribution was launched in the Matabeleland south as the Regional Director, National Coordinator and translator held the Bible up and another pastor prayed. The program ended with the distribution of Bibles and 'Which Bible Version' booklets.

Since we had delayed in Bulawayo in the morning, our programs were somehow affected especially in Esibomvu. We arrived very late in the afternoon. Some people thought we would not make it to the place. The meeting was held in a local community hall. Here we had to make everything brief because it was getting late. After brief introductions, I was called



upon to give a word of exhortation. Then the brethren came in to talk about Bible versions, and lastly the translator talked about Ndebele Bible translation. We then started the distribution exercise. As the distribution progressed, some women in the audience started singing for joy after receiving free Bibles. There was so much joy among the rural community for having been blessed with Bibles, a thing which had never happened to them before. Thirty-five boxes containing 420 Bibles were allocated. Copies of 'Which Bible Version?' were also distributed. We were through with our program just before it got dark. The local team had prepared some food for us and those from distant places. We quickly took the meal and then started off for Bulawayo on a dust road connecting to a highway, using a different route from the previous one we used when going to Esibomvu.

Thursday morning, 6 October 2016, the team decided that two of the members should go ahead to Victoria Falls town with 73 boxes of Bibles, while the rest of us went to Plumtree. Then two of us would join the brothers in Victoria Falls after Plumtree's program later in the evening. The Two brethren went by bus. They got there late in the afternoon and were welcomed by the local organising committee. We headed for Plumtree, a border town with Botswana, to continue with our program. We carried 22 boxes containing 264 Bibles. We got there by mid-morning. On our way the vehicle developed a fault of overheating. Nevertheless, we got there safely.

After prayer and introductions, I was invited to give a devotional word, which I did. Then one pastor spoke on Bible versions, while another talked about the translation of the Ndebele Bible we were distributing. We then distributed Bibles and 'Which Bible Version?' booklets to all the participants.

We went to an auto spare shop where the driver bought flash liquid and used it

thinking maybe the cooling system has some blockage. They filled the radiator with some more water and we started our journey back to Bulawayo, and then proceed to Victoria Falls Town. After driving for some good miles, the overheating continued and even grew worse to the extent of damaging the sensors for the gauge and it stopped functioning. Later the radiator was discovered to be leaking. We stopped three times before we could get to Bulawayo.

We got to Bulawayo early evening and went to Victoria Falls road to hitchhike. We got into a seven-seater car which had five people in it. We left Bulawayo around 7.00pm and planned to spend a night Hwange, a town 100km before Victoria Falls. After one hour on the road we had puncture on the rear left wheel. They changed and put on the spare wheel and back on the road. After two hours also, we had another puncture on the same left rear wheel. Before the puncture, we had stopped at a service station to buy water; I noticed that the same wheel had low pressure. I told the friend to tell the driver but he somehow ignored my advice. It was like Paul advising the ship crew not to set sail, but they could not hear. This time it was in the middle of Hwange National Park, and it was late at night. I was told not to get out of the car:

there are lions there. After some one hour plus, two men came to our rescue from Hwange with a spare wheel, quickly replaced the punctured one and off we went. We got to



***A leaking radiator***

Hwange at 1.00am. We were picked from the station by our host for the night, had a bit of food and then we rested. One of the team members in Bulawayo had contacted his friend and made arrangements for our lodging. We thank God for this hospitality. We continued our journey to Victoria Falls, our last point of distribution for the program. We found the brethren who went ahead of us the previous day had started off with the program. We thank God for this arrangement, because it helped us so much after the breakdowns we had. We joined in just when they were looking at



**Distributing the Bibles**

Bible versions. We made our contributions; mine was on being faithful to the Word of God. We exhorted the brethren to study the Word of God, not just for preaching

purposes but also for defending the truth of God and faithful translations of the Word of God. The program ended with the distribution of Bibles and booklets. A total of 73 boxes were distributed.

There has been joy in all the places where we had been and done the distribution; the folk have been very thankful to God for Trinitarian Bible Society for the grant of the Ndebele Bibles, especially now that they have a translation from the Biblical languages; and for Free Grace Evangelistic Association for teaching and facilitating the distribution. All other translations have been taken from the English modern versions of the Bible. Now there is a version like the English Authorised Version. This has been a milestone in the church history in Zimbabwe, and Africa as a whole.

We are very thankful to FGEA UK for the

support being given to FGEA Africa, both spiritual and material. We have managed to move from one place to another because of assistance from FGEA in the UK. Thank you for your prayers which are of great

value. Heavenly records will only reveal such treasure at the end time. We are very thankful for the TBS grant which has come at the right time, even when the nation is going through an economic crisis. Without it we could have not handed out Bibles to thousands of Christians in Zimbabwe.

I am very thankful to God for the brethren, the FGEA National Coordinator, Secretary, Bulawayo Zone committee and all the organising committees in various places for their contribution, and hard work in organising this tremendous work of distributing the Word of God across Matabeleland. They have been planning and working tirelessly, so that our brothers and sisters can receive the best Ndebele Bible translation. Many times, they have been away from home for days, travelled on unsafe roads and at times in awkward hours. The Lord himself is able to reward such works of love.

After our three-day Bible distribution program had ended on Friday afternoon, we went to share a moment as a team at one of the eating places in town. After the meal, we took a cab and the brethren escorted me to the border with Zambia, and then we crossed over the Zambezi to Zambia. It was here where we bid farewell and then they returned to cross the river back to Zimbabwe.



**Pastor Alex Madzongwe speaking to the audience in Victoria Falls Town.**



# Trinitarian Bible Society

## International Headquarters

Trinitarian Bible Society  
William Tyndale House  
29 Deer Park Road  
London  
SW19 3NN  
England

**Telephone:** (020) 8543 7857

**website:** [www.tbsbibles.org](http://www.tbsbibles.org)

**email:** [contact@tbsbibles.org](mailto:contact@tbsbibles.org)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/pages/Trinitarian-Bible-Society/294634290628870](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Trinitarian-Bible-Society/294634290628870)

**Office Hours:** Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Registered Charity No.: 233082 (England) SC038379 (Scotland)  
V.A.T. Registration No.: GB 215 9219 67

### **Auditors:**

**Jacob Cavenagh & Skeet**  
5 Robin Hood Lane  
Sutton  
Surrey, SM1 2SW

### **Solicitors:**

**Bates, Wells & Braithwaite**  
10 Queen Street Place  
London, EC4R 1BE

### **Bankers:**

**Arbuthnot Latham & Co Ltd**  
Arbuthnot House  
7 Wilson St  
London, EC2M 2SN

**Account Name:** Trinitarian Bible Society

**Sterling Account No.:** 71529601 **Sort Code:** 30-13-93

**Swift ID Code/BIC:** ARBUGB2L

**Euro Account No.:** 31529601

**IBAN for Euro Account:** GB19 ARBU 3003 0831 5296 01

## International Branches

### **Australian Branch**

**National Secretary:** Mr. A. Brown, B.E.  
**Trinitarian Bible Society (Australia)**  
P.O.Box 1381  
GRAFTON NSW 2460, Australia  
**Tel.:** +61 2 6642 8880 **Fax:** +61 2 6642 8881  
**email:** [TBS@trinitarianbiblesociety.org.au](mailto:TBS@trinitarianbiblesociety.org.au)

### **Brazilian Branch**

**President:** The Rev. Dr. T. L. Gilmer  
**Executive Secretary:** Pr. H. R. Gilmer, M.A.  
**Sociedade Bíblica Trinitariana do Brasil**  
Rua Julio de Castilhos, 108/120  
Belenzinho  
03059-000 São Paulo, SP, Brazil  
**Tel.:** (11) 2693-5663 **Fax:** (11) 2695-3635  
**email:** [sbtb@biblias.com.br](mailto:sbtb@biblias.com.br)

### **Canadian Branch**

**General Secretary:** Mr. A. Stoutjesdyk, B.Ed., M.Ed.  
**Trinitarian Bible Society (Canada)**  
9136 Young Road  
Chilliwack, B.C.  
V2P 4R4, Canada  
**Tel.:** (604) 793-2232 **Fax:** (604) 793-2262  
**Toll free.:** 1-855-793-2232  
**email:** [office@tbscanada.org](mailto:office@tbscanada.org)

### **New Zealand Branch**

**Chairman:** Mr. B. de Boer  
**Trinitarian Bible Society (New Zealand)**  
PO Box 137025  
Parnell, Auckland 1151, New Zealand  
**Tel.:** 09 263 5919  
**email:** [sales@tbs.org.nz](mailto:sales@tbs.org.nz)

### **USA Branch**

**General Secretary:** Mr. W. Greendyk, B.A.  
**Trinitarian Bible Society (USA)**  
927 Alpine Commerce Park, Suite 100,  
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49544, USA  
**Tel.:** (616) 735-3695 **Fax:** (616) 785-7237  
**email:** [tbsusa@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tbsusa@sbcglobal.net)



## *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 contact the Society.*

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**Hangzhou, China**



**Trinitarian Bible Society**

*William Tyndale House, 29 Deer Park Road  
London, SW19 3NN, England*

**email:** [contact@tbsbibles.org](mailto:contact@tbsbibles.org)  
[www.tbsbibles.org](http://www.tbsbibles.org)