



Quarterly Record

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April–June 2021



THE WORD OF GOD AMONG ALL NATIONS



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THE 190TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ADVANCE NOTICE

GOD WILLING ON

Saturday, 18 September 2021

location to be confirmed

The Business Meeting will include reports and updates on the Society's work, including the Amharic translation project.

After the Business Meeting,

The Rev. Dafydd Morris

Deputation Speaker of the Society
is expected to preach.

All are invited to attend. Please see our website for most up-to-date details.

THE WORD OF GOD AMONG ALL NATIONS



Introduction from the Resources Director

There is often a focus, quite properly, on the Society's aim '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'. The Word of God (read or preached) is generally the means used by the Holy Spirit in the new birth, and once born these 'lambs' in Christ's fold desire to be fed with the 'sincere milk of the word' (John 21.15; 1 Peter 2.2).

The sheep now in the fold also need feeding (John 21.16–17) and they are promised the 'bread of life', which is Christ (John 6.35, 48). But in order to feed confidently they will want to know that they have 'clean provender' (Isaiah 30.24). This is where some of the Society's other aims come in, such as 'to promote Bible

translations which are accurate and trustworthy' and 'to uphold the Bible as the inspired, inerrant Word of God'.

When exhorting ancient Israel to obedience, God reminded them that '... he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live' (Deuteronomy 8.3). It is very telling that this is a verse which Christ famously quoted to Satan during his temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4.4; Luke 4.4).

Manna as a type of the Word of God provides a most instructive meditation, and it is noteworthy that the connection

between the two came directly from God's own lips. Manna is mentioned seventeen times in Scripture; we initially encounter it in Exodus 16 when it first came down upon the earth. We are told '*there lay a small round thing*' (v. 14) '*like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey*' (v. 31). The Israelites were promised that '*the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full*' (v. 8).

What a picture we have here of the Word of God as setting forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ, for He is the Word and is set forth everywhere in Scripture, if only we had eyes to see it. The manna was white, setting forth the purity of the written Word (Proverbs 30.5) and the incarnate Word (Hebrews 7.26). It was like '*wafers*,' a word used three further times in the Pentateuch. These wafers were made of unleavened bread and were always anointed with oil (Exodus 29.2; Leviticus 2.4; Numbers 6.15), teaching us that Christ was untainted by sin (Hebrews 4.15) and that He was truly the anointed one (Psalm 45.7; Isaiah 61.1).

These wafers tasted like honey. It is well known that honey, generally admired for its sweetness, can also leave a bitter aftertaste when the bees which made it have taken pollen from certain types of flower. On that memorable night when the Israelites left Egypt, they were told to eat the Passover lamb not only with unleavened bread but also with bitter herbs. Here we see in type the bitter sufferings of Christ, and as we feast upon Christ in the Word we shall taste sweetness and joy on account of the fruits of His sufferings in bringing salvation to such unworthy sinners. But we shall also taste bitterness and sorrow on account of our sins and the immeasurable pain and suffering that they cost the Saviour, particularly in Gethsemane and on Calvary.

Jesus taught us to pray '*give us this day our daily bread*' (Matthew 6.11), a desire that every believer needs answered in both a spiritual and a natural sense. The Israelites of old were promised their '*morning bread to the full*' in the form of manna. How often the fulness of Christ is brought before us directly in Scripture (John 1.16; Ephesians 1.23, 3.19, 4.13; Colossians 1.19, 2.9) before we even start to consider the many portions that set forth His attributes, characteristics and beauties. How much better our lives would be if we were so saturated in the Word as to receive somewhat of this fulness of Christ at the commencement of every day. This does not always mean reading a long portion—as we read of the Israelites, '*He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack*' (2 Corinthians 8.15). A small portion of the Word read slowly and digested prayerfully will often do us much more good than a long passage read over but not really absorbed. May we earnestly covet such a daily portion of Christ!

The final Scriptural reference to manna is also very instructive. God had instructed John to write to the church at Pergamos warning them regarding various sins and errors and calling them to repent; then He says, '*to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna*' (Revelation 2.17). What a gracious promise and encouragement to fleeing, repenting sinners, that they will be given to eat spiritually of the Word of God, and indeed of Christ Himself. What more can we ask for?

Thinking of this, in His earthly ministry our Lord drew upon this important analogy three times in John 6 in that beautiful discourse on Himself as the '*bread of life*'. Paul brings this forth again in Hebrews 9.4 when he reminds his readers of the manna

kept in the Ark of the Covenant. When in the desert the manna only lasted for one or two days, but in the Ark it was miraculously kept for hundreds of years. Whilst we must be careful not to strain Scriptural analogies, does this not remind us that the Word of the Lord is settled for ever (Psalm 119.89, 160; Isaiah 40.8; 1 Peter 1.23, 25) and that Christ is unchangeable (Hebrews 7.24, 13.8)? Where else can such texts lead us other than to a firm persuasion in the doctrine of divine preservation of the Scriptures?

The Society's emphasis on accuracy, trustworthiness and inerrancy is closely tied to an immovable persuasion that the reliable biblical texts that we still have today in the original languages (Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Received Texts) have been providentially preserved by the Holy Spirit as certainly as when they were first breathed into those holy men of God in old time who 'spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' (2 Peter 1.21). Contrast this with the latest invention in Bible translation and textual understanding, the so-called 'Coherence-Based Genealogical Method' (CBGM) which seeks to show such erroneous notions as 'How Your Greek New Testament Is Changing'!¹ Sadly, such corruptions will inevitably happen when men rely on their own wisdom rather than believing by faith in the record of Scripture itself concerning divine preservation. I commend to you the excellent article on CBGM in this *Quarterly Record*, written by our good friend Dr Jeffrey T. Riddle.

In conclusion, how solemn and disconcerting it would be if we could not rely on the Bible we have in our hands and be constantly wondering what in it was wrong, missing or included erroneously! The obvious question that would follow is, will the church ever get to a settled, reliable text and so

receive the Word of God in its fullness and purity? Indeed, will the church ever return to a biblical understanding of the preservation of the Scriptures, an understanding undermined by modern textual considerations?² We can be thankful that the reality is very different and so much better; we can be wholly confident in the Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Received Texts from which the English Authorised Version and the other great Reformation-era translations were translated, and which the Society still uses as the bases for its translations in the twenty-first century.

Along with Dr Riddle's look at the latest trends in Greek New Testament critical scholarship we are pleased to present Pastor Michael Harley's devotional consideration of God's provision of the faithful Scriptures from Isaiah 59.21. In addition we have part 2 of our USA General Secretary's trip to Cuba. We take a quick look at the Armenian language, and conclude with our usual letters of thanks in the provision of Scriptures for distribution worldwide. I commend this edition of the *Quarterly Record* for your information and edification.

Endnotes:

1. Peter J. Gurry, 'How Your Greek New Testament Is Changing: An Introduction to the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM)', *academia.edu*, www.academia.edu/11926275/How_Your_Greek_New_Testament_Is_Changing_An_Introduction_to_the_Coherence-Based_Genealogical_Method_CBGM_, accessed 8 March 2021.

2. Please see QR607, pages 16–22 (www.tbsbibles.org/QR607.pdf) for a brief review of our article on the doctrine of preservation, and the entire article at tbsbibles.org/lord_preserved_word.

COMPLETE CERTAINTY

by Pastor M. Harley
a Vice-President of the Society

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this *is* my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that *is* upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

Isaiah 59.20–21



The attributes of the Father guarantee the binding nature of everything He says. 'For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself' (Hebrews 6.13). King David was assured of the eternity of the kingdom of heaven because it was rooted in a covenant between two of the Persons of the Godhead. 'The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool' (Psalm 110.1).

In the verses we are considering the same complete certainty prevails. The Father makes a binding agreement with His Son (the First Person of the Godhead with the Second) on behalf of the Saviour's people. Those people, His 'seed', are described in Isaiah 59.20 as 'them that turn from transgression'.

The Lord is addressing His only begotten Son, the Saviour, in His status as the Son of man, the last Adam, the Representative of His people, the Mediator. His people

are those who have been saved from their sins by the Gospel of redeeming blood, on whom the mighty third Person of the Trinity has worked in all His power; on whom the preaching of the Gospel has fallen in that same mighty power.

'Every word of God is pure' (Proverbs 30.5). Many Scriptures assert this truth. 'Every word' intends those words He has Himself spoken directly, no man being present, or between the Persons of the Godhead. We have for example in Genesis 1.3, 'And God said, Let there be light: and there was light' and so on throughout the record of the creation.

But unless such words were written down, inscripturated for us under the Holy Spirit's direction, we would have had no knowledge of His utterances. There is therefore no problem in interpreting our verses as meaning specifically the Bible, the Holy Scriptures.

The words put into the mouth of the Saviour are the words of the Gospel, known



to us from the four Gospels especially. As one commentator says (David Brown on *The Four Gospels*), 'The Fourfold Gospel is the central portion of Divine Revelation. Into it, as a Reservoir, all the foregoing revelations pour their full tide, and out of it, as a Fountain, flow all the subsequent revelations.'¹

The words which the Father has put into the mouth of the Saviour naturally embrace every other portion of the Holy Scriptures. There is no difficulty in interpreting this passage as the whole Bible.

'My words . . . shall not depart out of thy mouth' means that their significance shall never be eroded; they will never be denuded of their power; they will never disappear off the face of the earth. Such words as were put into His mouth by the Father, which remain sufficient for our salvation and were spoken by the Saviour, are ever recorded and constantly life-giving through the Holy Spirit. With John we are assured that there are 'many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written' (John 21.25). But the words which shall not depart out of the Saviour's mouth are choice words such as the Father and the Holy Spirit have selected.

The covenant our Heavenly Father made with Christ's people and Himself must and shall eternally remain.

So it follows that the words of Scripture will never be lost sight of. One generation shall effectively pass it on to the next, always and for ever. At no time subsequent to the writing of the New Testament and

its conjunction with the Old will it be lost, because it is 'from henceforth and for ever'. Never will the Saviour's people, His seed, be without those words.



The preservation of the Holy Scriptures is founded upon the Father's most binding covenant with His Son and thus with His people. Reasoning which concludes that we do not now possess the entirety of God's word to His people is fighting against God. It is a threat to the life of the believer should it be once conceded that there are doubts about its contents.

There are those who have told us for the past two hundred years that we do not yet have a definitive

edition of the Word of God. They are still struggling to reconstruct the original. If their assumptions are correct, nobody has ever yet possessed the true Scriptures. The folly of imagining that faith in Christ does not possess its core document, to which everything else must be brought to the test, beggars belief.

The Father emphatically states in these verses that there never was a time and never will be a time when the inspired Word of God in its totality has not been the possession of Christian believers. No matter what the scholarship of fallen men declares, what God says goes. If there is to be a battle in our hearts between the scholarship of the cleverest of men and the declaration of God Himself we should always entrust ourselves to God.

Endnote:

1. David Brown, *The Four Gospels* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1969), iii.



Editorial Director's Report

by Jonathan D. Arnold

For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works *are done* in truth.

Psalm 33.4

As there are substantial articles in this *Quarterly Record*—including the one by Dr Riddle below—my Editorial report is brief.

We have been immensely grateful for the support given to the Society throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and are thankful to our translators who have laboured in different and in some cases difficult circumstances. We would appreciate your prayers for the vast array of typesetting work that is currently ongoing. We are preparing for print Scriptures in such diverse languages as Amharic, Bemba, Chinese, Dan/Gio, French and Simte. May the Lord hasten the day when these translations are being distributed and grant us all diligence as we prepare them for publication.

We have been able to spend time on a new article that is aimed at introducing the whole topic of the Word of God and the underlying texts in a

readable and understandable format for secondary school (high school) students and upwards, including adults. The article presents the important details of the establishment of the Bible. We are grateful to Christian McShaffrey for sharing this article; it is available online at www.tbsbibles.org/HowTheHolyBibleCameToBe and will be made available in print through your local branch in the coming months.

In the last week we have been able to complete print ready files for the calendars for 2022! These have to be prepared early each year so that we have enough time to print and ship them around the world. This represents a significant amount of work as we produce Words of Life Calendars in fifteen languages and Golden Thoughts Calendars in ten languages. May the Lord be pleased to use the verses of Scripture on the calendars, that many may be brought to know the Saviour of the Scriptures and grow in His Word.

Armenian

by Hannah Woodhams

Sales and Grants Assistant



Introduction

Armenia is a landlocked country located at the border of Europe and Asia in the Caucasus region, surrounded by Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan. It is home to a small population of just under 3 million. However, it has not always been the largely poverty-stricken country that it now is. Its current condition is principally the continuing result of a major earthquake in 1988. Combined with this was war with Azerbaijan (1988–1994) over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in southwestern Azerbaijan, a conflict which remains unresolved; it erupted again in 2020 with Armenia being heavily defeated by the Turkish-backed Azeri forces and having to cede some of the enclave to Azerbaijan.



Christianity in Armenia

A little known fact is that Armenia was the first country to establish Christianity as its state religion, which it did in AD 301. The Armenian Apostolic Church was, according

to tradition, set up by Jesus's disciples Thaddaeus and Bartholomew, hence its name. Today 90% of the country's professing Christians are adherents to the Apostolic Church.

The Bible in Armenia

The Bible was first translated into the classical Armenian language, known as Grabar,

by the monk Mesrop Mashtots, who had to invent the Armenian alphabet in order to translate the Scriptures. Work on this early

Mount Ararat sits on the Turkish Armenian border.



Statue of Mesrop Mashtots

Bible took place from AD 396–430. The Old Testament was translated from the Greek Septuagint, although later

modified to conform more closely to the Masoretic Hebrew text; the New Testament came from the Syriac translation.

For centuries the classical Armenian Bible was copied by hand. The first printed edition was produced in Amsterdam in the 1660s. However, today this edition is beyond the reach of ordinary people, being in a form of language only scholars can read.

In the nineteenth century the Bible was translated into Western Armenian, the form of the language used in the area of Armenia under Turkish rule. Following what has been called the Armenian genocide of 1915, millions of Armenians were either killed or dispersed from Western Armenia; this form of the language is now used only by the Armenian Diaspora.

The TBS Armenian Bible

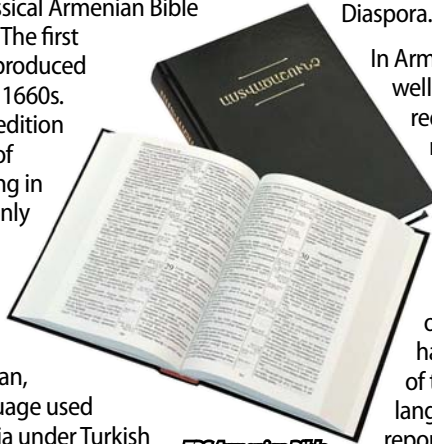
Since the Western Armenian language was and still is difficult for people in the country of Armenia to understand, a need was identified in the 1990s for a Bible in the Eastern Armenian language. In 1998 the Society commissioned an Armenian couple to revise the classical Bible of AD 405, bringing it into closer conformity to the Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Received Texts, using current literary Eastern Armenian. The Gospel according to John

was first published in 1999, followed by the New Testament in 2005 and the entire Bible in 2012.

Distribution

Since 2012 there has been great demand for the TBS Armenian Bible and it has been reprinted several times. Over 60,000 copies have now been published and are being distributed amongst Armenian speakers

both in Armenia itself and to the Diaspora.



TBS Armenian Bible

In Armenia the Bible has been well accepted and many requests for Bibles are received daily by the distribution ministry there. Even as boxes and pallets of the Scriptures are about to enter Armenia, customs officials at the borders have gladly received copies of the Bible in their own language. Many encouraging reports have been received of the Lord using His Word to

convert Armenian people to faith in Christ. In this land in which so many people have so very little, the hunger and thirst for the Word of God is very great.

We would encourage your prayers for Armenian speakers worldwide, and for the Scriptures to be used of God for His glory.





The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method

CBGM

The Newest 'New' Method

by **Jeffrey T. Riddle, Ph.D.**

Pastor, Christ Reformed Baptist Church, Virginia, USA

Editorial Director's Introduction

In the Society's history we have seen many attempts to develop a more accurate Greek New Testament text based on what are presumed to be better manuscripts using various contemporary methodologies of textual criticism. Those following these approaches effectively abandon the biblical, self-authenticating arguments for the preservation of the Scriptures asserted by the Society and those who hold to the Greek Received Text which underlies the Authorised (King James) Version and other faithful Reformation era translations.

In recent years a newer method of textual study has come to the fore that is being studiously applied to the New Testament. Known as the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (often abbreviated as CBGM) it is being avidly accepted and will doubtless be embraced by many other Bible translators and publishers. Portions of the New Testament have already been drafted using this methodology, forming the beginnings of what is likely to be a new base Greek text for future Bible translations.

The Society observed in 1906 that the change of approach to the Greek text promoted by Westcott and Hort and developed by Eberhard Nestle was 'a fact so revolutionary in itself, so important in its character, and fraught with such momentous results to Bible circulation'.

The Society also took note at that time that the ‘new’ Greek Text was being taken up by many. But it would only be an initial step. One of the then new text’s leading proponents, Dr Nestle, stated ‘We must not think that the critical work of the Text is going to be finished.’¹ How true that has proved to be!

The advent of this newer new method of Coherence-Based Genealogical Method has the potential to advocate for even greater changes to the text of Scripture—some that will doubtless impact doctrine more severely than what we already see. It will also bolster arguments opposing the Received Text (TR) that the Society seeks to uphold.

Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) is a methodology based on computerised mathematical modelling, and as such any critical assessment of it needs to be somewhat technical. But in the following article by Dr Jeffrey T. Riddle concerning CBGM you will find important information and careful assessment, and a warning of things to come as methods of textual criticism continue to evolve. We are grateful to Dr Riddle for his expertise in this area and more particularly for his faithful stand for the inspiration and preservation of Scripture.

Therefore, we present this article to provide readers with important insight into the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method and to prepare the ground for the stand that we will need to make in the future against this deeply flawed approach to textual criticism.

The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method CBGM

The Newest ‘New’ Method

No man also having drunk old *wine* straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

Luke 5.39

A scholarly article introducing the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) is titled ‘How Your Greek NT Is Changing’.² Indeed, the emergence of the CBGM at the start of the twenty-first century promises to be as groundbreaking for modern text criticism as was Wescott and Hort’s precursor to ‘reasoned eclecticism’ in the nineteenth century. This stands in contrast to the Received Text position and a Scripture ‘kept pure in all ages’. CBGM is the newest

‘new’ method to be applied in the scholarly reconstruction of the text of the Greek New Testament.

The Old ‘New’ Method

Before describing the CBGM, we should note two distinctives of the old method. First, the old method focused on the grouping of manuscripts into text-types. Four text-types were identified: the Alexandrian (including the influential

Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts), the Western, the Byzantine, and the Caesarean. Of these, the Alexandrian was assumed to be 'the oldest and most reliable' or the 'neutral text'.³ On the other hand, the Byzantine manuscripts, which undergirded the traditional text, were considered late, inferior, secondary, and marred by harmonization.

Second, the old method was based on the goal of reconstructing the original autographs. This reconstruction method was, in fact, a departure from the doctrine of the divine preservation of Scripture.⁴ This new goal was articulated by Marvin R. Vincent in 1899.

Textual Criticism is that process by which it is sought to determine the original text of a document or of a collection of documents, and to exhibit it, freed from all errors, corruptions, and variations which it may have accumulated in the course of its transmission by successive copyings.⁵

This goal was pursued with confidence by scholars of the nineteenth century. Thus as Westcott and Hort introduced their influential 1881 Greek text, 'This edition is an attempt to present exactly the words of the New Testament, so far as they can now be determined from surviving documents'.⁶

It was this old 'new' method, with its text-types and autographic reconstruction, which attempted to undermine the credibility of the Textus Receptus (TR) and then to topple it. Eldon Jay Epp used military imagery to describe the scholarly assault on the TR.⁷ He considered Karl Lachmann's Greek New Testament of 1831 a 'beachhead' for a 'D-Day' attack. If 'D-Day' belonged to Lachmann, then 'V-Day' belonged to the undisputed 'general of the army' F. J. A. Hort and his 'first officer' B. F. Westcott.

The Printed Editions of the Modern Text

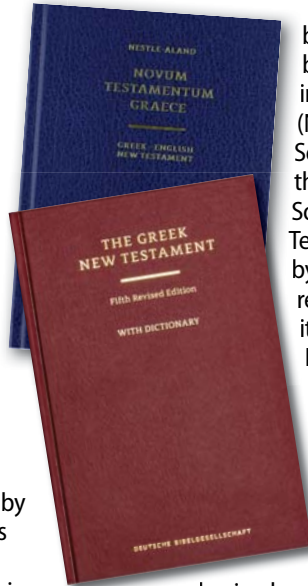
The old method also produced a series of printed scholarly editions of the Greek New Testament. Two major handbook editions have eventually come to predominate. First, there is the German Bible Society's Nestle-Aland Greek New

Testament (known by its familiar blue cover) now in its 28th edition (NA28, 2012).

Second, there is the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (known by its familiar brick red cover), now in its Fifth Revised Edition (UBS5, 2014). These now serve as the standard scholarly text of the Greek New Testament.⁸ The two editions

having been brought into agreement under a common committee when the UBS3 (1983) adopted the same text as NA26 (1979).⁹ Most persons who study the Greek New Testament in universities, seminaries and Bible colleges across the world use one or both of these editions.

With the NA28/UBS5, significant changes were introduced, especially in the Catholic Epistles (James to Jude). The title page of the NA28 text acknowledges that it has been produced under new editorial leadership: 'Edited by the Institute for New Testament Textual Research Münster/ Westphalia under the direction of Holger Strutwolf'.¹⁰ In the Foreword, Strutwolf states:



... the new edition presents a fundamentally new conception, at least with respect to the Catholic Letters, because for this part of the New Testament the Editio Critica Maior (ECM) is already available [since 1997]. The ECM represents a new level of scientific research on the text of the Greek New Testament and offers a text newly established on this basis.¹¹

The editors later continue, 'The Catholic Letters were revised according to a fundamentally new concept which in the long run will be adopted for the entire edition.'¹² They then explain that this new concept is the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM) as developed by German scholar Gerd Mink. This method examines 'percentages of agreement between witnesses compared' in order 'to arrange the potential ancestors of a witness in a ranking order, according to their degree of relationship' adding, 'The method can also be applied to a comparison with the reconstructed initial text.'¹³

The modern text is indeed changing. A new method is replacing the old method. It has been applied to the Catholic Epistles, and it will eventually be applied to the rest of the New Testament. In the end, it will also make its way into modern translations based on this text.

What is the CBGM?

The CBGM is a new approach to textual criticism, which makes use of computer technology to compare and analyze witnesses to readings (not just physical manuscripts containing those readings) from the Greek New Testament. In their introduction to the CBGM, Wasserman and Gurry define the CBGM as,

... a method that (1) uses a set of computer tools (2) based in a new

way of relating manuscript texts that is (3) designed to help us understand the origin and history of the New Testament text.¹⁴

David C. Parker offers this brief explanation of the 'Münster Method'.

It is in essence very simple. It has as its foundation a full list of variants made by comparing complete transcriptions of witnesses. Where there are many manuscripts (as in the case of the New Testament works), these witnesses are scientifically selected by analyzing all known copies in a set of test passages, but where the size of the task is practicable, the inclusion of all witnesses is desirable. The editor studies each unit of variation and where possible produces a stemma showing how the readings developed from one another. This relationship is recorded in a database, in which the relationship between the manuscripts is also recorded and calculated, in particular which is the most likely ancestor of each manuscript. The editor can then ask the database to disclose how all the manuscripts relate to each other. The resulting diagram is described as the textual flow.¹⁵

Despite Parker's assurance that the method is 'in essence very simple', it has thus far proven to be perplexing to many. Peter J. Gurry has observed, 'One of the most common reactions to the method is neither acceptance nor rejection but rather defeated resignation about ever understanding it.'¹⁶

The CBGM is being applied in the Editio Critica Maior (ECM), a major scholarly revision of the modern critical Greek text, being underwritten by the Union of the German Academies of Science

and Humanities. The ECM of the Catholic Epistles was published in 1997 (revised in 2013), and of Acts in 2017. The entire ECM is projected to be completed by 2030.¹⁷

What is ‘New’ about the CBGM?

There are at least two ways in which the CBGM represents a significant shift in method.

First, the CBGM rejects traditional text-types.

The CBGM no longer attempts to reconstruct the text on the basis of categorizing manuscripts according to text-types. Gurry notes, ‘This shift alone could be momentous for the discipline.’¹⁸ David C. Parker observes, ‘There are so few manuscripts from the first seven centuries, so few survivors from the thousands that must have once existed, that they cannot be classified into groups.’¹⁹ Interestingly enough, the only ‘text-type’ to which reference continues to be made in the CBGM is the Byzantine. Gurry notes that the CBGM has even resulted in ‘a renewed appreciation for the so-called Byzantine text.’²⁰

The abandonment of the traditional text-types has accompanied a reassessment of Westcott and Hort. Parker notes that they reached their conclusions ‘with a totally inadequate amount of evidence’ and even suggests that their textual ‘theory does not deserve the reverence which has been accorded it.’²¹ Interestingly enough, those who attempted to topple the TR in the nineteenth century have been toppled by the CBGM in the twenty-first century!

Second, the CBGM does not seek to restore the autographic text but the ‘initial text’.

The old method confidently asserted its goal to remove corruption and reconstruct

the original autograph. By the mid-twentieth century, however, Robert Grant would describe this task as a veritable ‘impossible possibility.’²² Postmodern voices began to be raised against the very concept of an authoritative ‘original text’. David Parker observed, ‘Generally debate has centered on the meaning of a single authoritative text. But it will soon become plain that such a text does not exist today, and never has existed, and that therefore the theological arguments built on such a text are castles in the air.’²³

The CBGM no longer articulates its goal to be the reconstruction of the original autographic text. Instead, its advocates speak of reconstructing the Ausgangstext or ‘initial text’. Parker defines the initial text as ‘the editor’s reconstruction of the oldest knowable form’ of the text. He adds that the initial text ‘was never the text of an actual manuscript’ and ‘has to be regarded as an ideal rather than a real text.’²⁴ Some evangelicals have continued to insist that the ‘initial text’ is at least a close approximation of the authorial text, but they too have largely abandoned the goal of restoring the ‘autograph.’²⁵

How Has the CBGM Changed the Modern Text Thus Far?

As noted, the CBGM has only been applied thus far to the Catholic Epistles in the handbooks. The text has been altered there in at least thirty-three places. A list of these is provided on pages 50*–51* in the NA28. Two very significant changes appear at 2 Peter 3.10 and Jude 5.

First, the closing words at 2 Peter 3.10 in the KJV (a translation based on the traditional Greek text of the NT) say that on the day of the Lord, ‘the earth also and

the works that are therein shall be burned up'. Previous editions of the modern critical text had challenged the verb 'shall be burned up', suggesting it should read 'will be exposed' (as in the English Standard Version). The CBGM version of 2 Peter 3.10, however, adds a new twist in that it suggests that the Greek negative particle, *ouch*, should be inserted before the verb, so that the passage would potentially read that the earth 'will not be exposed'. What is more, this reading is not supported by any extant Greek witness, but it appears in only a few late Syriac and Coptic manuscripts. Thus, the CBGM of 2 Peter 3.10 introduces a conjectural emendation based on no extant Greek evidence. This insertion significantly alters the eschatological perspective of the verse. At the day of the Lord, did Peter say the earth would be burned up, or that it would 'not be exposed'? This is a significant theological difference.

Second, Jude 5 in the KJV states, 'that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not'. The reader will notice that the title 'Lord' (Greek: *kurios*) is used in reference to God as the one who delivered Israel from Egypt. The new CBGM text, however, uses 'Jesus' here, rather than 'Lord'. 'Jesus' appears in Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, but 'Lord' is supported by the vast majority of Greek manuscripts and is the reading of the TR. The abbreviated *nomina sacra*²⁶ for the two words would have been very similar and easily confused by scribes. One might think it right to approve of 'Jesus' here as reflecting a high Christology, but this usage would produce a theological difficulty, since it would make reference to Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, at a time in history (at the Exodus) before the incarnation had yet occurred. The traditional text is, therefore, to be preferred.

Evaluation of the CBGM

Here are six critiques of the CBGM.

First: *The CBGM's use of computer/digital technology does not eliminate human subjectivity in its application.*

The CBGM is not free from human subjectivity. Klaus Wachtel concedes that the data produced by CBGM must, in the end, be subjectively interpreted and that 'other scholars starting from different premises will come to different conclusions'.²⁷ Peter Gurry likewise notes that 'the results provided by the CBGM, like all text critical data, have to be weighed and interpreted by a human'.²⁸

Second: *The CBGM is not exempt from the charge of 'circular reasoning'.*

Scholars tend to reach outcomes based on their initial presuppositions (circular reasoning). Though the CBGM has ostensibly abandoned the traditional text-types, the scholars using the method still appear to presuppose that the Alexandrian readings are generally superior and take this as their 'initial text'.

Third: *The CBGM abandons any hope of ever recovering the original autograph.*

The CBGM claims only to recover the 'initial text' and makes clear that this 'initial text' must not necessarily be equated with the 'authorial text' (i.e., the autograph). Recovery of the autograph is seen as both untenable and undesirable. Bart Ehrman was among the first to suggest the need to move beyond the 'narrow concern for the autographs' and instead focus on the history of the transmission of the text, 'a history that can serve as a window into the social world

of early Christianity.²⁹ Most modern text critics no longer speak of recovering the autograph but of tracing the ‘reception history’ of a disputed passage. There is no concern to establish a standard and stable text to serve as a firm basis for confessional Christianity.

Fourth: The CBGM does not make use of patristic or versional evidence.

The CBGM does not generally incorporate into its textual flow-diagrams evidence from patristic writings (the Church Fathers) or early translations (like Old Latin, Syriac, etc.). In some cases, however, this data may be crucial. The Traditional Ending of Mark (Mark 16.9–20), for example, is cited by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus of Lyon in the second century. To exclude this evidence weakens a strong argument in favour of Mark’s ending.

Fifth: The CBGM allows for conjectural emendation, the incorporation of readings supported by no extant Greek manuscripts.

We have noted the conjectural emendation at 2 Peter 3.10. What will be the result when the CBGM is applied to the entire NT? How many more conjectures will be made? What doctrines will be affected?

Sixth: The CBGM is being used by only a very small number of scholars, primarily in one German academic institute.

It has been observed that modern text criticism has attempted to take the text of the Bible out of the hands of the church and to place it into the hands of the academy. Now, it appears that the modern text has been taken out of the hands of the larger academy and placed into the hands of an even smaller circle in Münster.

What’s on the Horizon?

The CBGM’s influence has only just begun. Holger Strutwolf has apparently suggested that NA29 will appear in 2022, with UBS6 to follow soon after.³⁰ The new edition will expand the CBGM application to Acts and at least one other book, probably Mark. The CBGM hopes to be applied to the entire New Testament by the 2030s.

CBGM: The End of Modern Text Criticism?

The CBGM’s emergence as the ‘newest’ new method has been both consequential and controversial. When the Editio Critica Maior process is complete and the CBGM has been applied to the entire Greek New Testament will this be the end of modern text criticism? Absolutely not. We can be sure that an even ‘newer’ new method will eventually arise. The proponents of modern textual criticism now declare that the goal of ever reconstructing a definitive autograph is only a chimera, a thing hoped or wished for, but which always remains illusory or impossible to achieve. Many evangelicals have surrendered assurance of ever knowing with full confidence what the text of the Word of God is. Daniel B. Wallace has written, ‘We do not have now—in our critical Greek texts or any translations—exactly what the authors of the New Testament wrote. Even if we did, we would not know it.’³¹ Such a perspective completely undermines the epistemological³² foundations of the Christian faith. If we do not know what the Bible is, we cannot know what the Bible says.

There is an alternative to the CBGM and to the ever-changing methods and texts of modern criticism. It is to hold fast to

the Received Text, faithfully preserved by God and kept pure in all ages. As the 'new' methods rise and fall, we can look to an 'old' text that is solid, stable, and unchanging. The old is indeed better.

Endnotes:

1. From a speech given by Dr Nestle as recorded in *Salz und Licht* (Salt and Light) no. 8, p. 20; quoted in Trinitarian Bible Society, *Quarterly Record* no. 187, October 1906, page 2.
2. Peter J. Gurry, 'How Your Greek NT is Changing: A Simple Introduction to the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method (CBGM)', *JETS*, 59/4 (2016): 675–689. See also Peter J. Gurry, *A Critical Examination of the CBGM in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Boston, MA, USA: Brill, 2017); and Tommy Wasserman and Peter J. Gurry, *A New Approach to Textual Criticism: An Introduction to the Coherence-Based Genealogical Method* (Atlanta, GA, USA: Society of Biblical Literature/Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2017).
3. B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *Introduction to the New Testament in the Original Greek* (1882; reprint by Hendrickson (Peabody, MA, USA: 1988): 126–130.
4. Westminster Confession of Faith 1:8.
5. Marvin R. Vincent, *A History of the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (New York, NY, USA: MacMillan, 1899): 1.
6. Westcott and Hort, *Introduction*, 3.
7. Eldon Jay Epp, 'Textual Criticism', in Eldon Jay Epp and George W. MacRae, eds., *The New Testament and Its Modern Interpreters* (Atlanta, GA, USA: Scholars Press, 1989): 75–126.
8. For a history of these two editions see Rolf Schäfer and Florian Voss, *Textual Research on the Bible: An Introduction to the Scholarly Editions of the German Bible Society* (Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008); Stanley E. Porter, *How We Got the New Testament: Text, Transmission, Translation* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Baker Academic, 2013): 48–50.
9. The committee originally consisted of Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren.
10. Holger Strutwolf, et al., *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Revised Edition (Stuttgart Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012).
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, 48*.
13. *Ibid.*, 52*.
14. Wasserman and Gurry, *A New Approach to Textual Criticism*, 3.

15. David C. Parker, *Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2012): 84–85.
16. Peter J. Gurry, 'How Your Greek NT is Changing', 675.
17. Information about the ECM can be found here online: www.academic-bible.com/en/bible-society-and-biblical-studies/current-projects/editio-critica-maioir-ecm.
18. Peter J. Gurry, 'How Your Greek NT is Changing', 685.
19. David C. Parker, *Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament*: 161, n. 29.
20. Peter J. Gurry, 'How Your Greek NT is Changing', 685.
21. David C. Parker, *Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament*, 82–83.
22. Robert M. Grant, *Historical Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, NY, USA: Harper & Row, 1963): 51.
23. David C. Parker, *The Living Text of the Gospels* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 76.
24. David C. Parker, *Textual Scholarship and the Making of the New Testament*, 103.
25. See Abidan Paul Shah, *Changing the Goalposts of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Eugene, OR, USA: Wipf & Stock, 2020): 9–27, 127–168.
26. Sacred names: abbreviations of sacred names or titles consisting of two or more letters from the original word, spanned by a line over the top of the letters. These are common in early Greek manuscripts.
27. Klaus Wachtel, 'The Coherence-Based Genealogical Method: A New Way to Reconstruct the Text of the Greek New Testament', John S. Kloppenborg and Judith H. Newman, Eds., *Editing the Bible: Assessing the Task Past and Present* (Atlanta, GA, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012): 138.
28. Peter J. Gurry, 'How Your Greek NT is Changing', 686.
29. Bart D. Ehrman, 'The Text as a Window: New Testament Manuscripts and the Social History of Early Christianity', Bart D. Ehrman and Michael W. Holmes, eds., *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (Grand Rapids, MI, USA: Eerdmans, 1995): 375.
30. Peter Gurry, 'Plans for the NA29 and the UBS6', 4 April 2019, evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2019/04/plans-for-na29-and-ubs6.html.
31. Daniel B. Wallace, 'Foreword', Elijah Hixson and Peter J. Gurry, Eds., *Myths and Mistakes in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Downers Grove, IL, USA: InterVarsity Press, 2019): xii.
32. Epistemology deals with the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge. Not being able to determine what God has said removes what we can validly know about the foundations of Christianity.



AN OPEN DOOR: God's Word to **CUBA** PART 2

By William Greendyk

General Secretary, TBS (USA)

Continued from QR633, October 2020

Arriving in Cuba

The old international arrivals building at Havana's airport was deserted apart from three immigration officials, my colleague and myself, sweating in the large, unventilated room. The few other passengers, all Cubans, who had been on the short flight from the US had long since left the airport. From time to time the immigration officers looked at

their watches and then at us again as they spoke softly to each other, intrigued by the sight of an American in a business suit and his younger colleague who was weighed down with a long tripod and a lot of other photography equipment.

In the Lord's providence, seven months to the day after I had met two Cuban pastors at a Bible printer's office in the United States, I now found myself in a country I

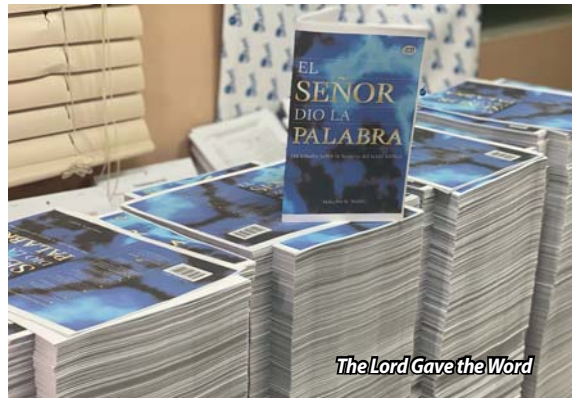


Sunset in Havana

had never dreamed of entering. True to his word, one of the young pastors I had met in a most remarkable manner the year before had put me in touch with a man from Cuba's Religious Council, who sent me the necessary forms to apply for the required religious visa.

A few weeks later this man, also a pastor, informed me by email that my visa and that of my colleague were approved—a fact that surprised and humbled me, because I knew several well-known pastors from the US who had applied for and been denied the very same visa. When I asked the man how he would send us our visas, he wrote back: 'I will be waiting at the immigration counter when you arrive to give you the visa'. In my travels to many other countries I had never heard of such a procedure, but who was I to question him? He asked for our flight information and told me he would be waiting for us at the airport with a rental car, since he would accompany us during the entire fourteen-day trip traversing the island on behalf of TBS—presenting the Society's revision of the Spanish Bible and distributing Spanish copies of the TBS Gospel according to John, Scripture leaflets and articles that were all printed using the same clandestine printing press the Cuban pastors had told me about seven months before. (As noted in the previous article, it is forbidden to send large quantities of Scriptures or Scripture items to Cuba; only small packages can be sent, and even those often do not arrive at their destination.)

When deplaning in Havana I had received a text message from our contact saying that his rental car had broken down on the twelve-hour journey from his hometown to the airport. 'Don't worry', he wrote, 'I shouldn't be more than an hour or two late'. So, standing awkwardly in the immigration hall waiting for him, we had arrived in Cuba



The Lord Gave the Word

but were not quite 'there' yet, since we still had no visa to present to the immigration officials. As I began to worry aloud, my colleague reminded me of all that the Lord had made possible thus far—meeting the two Cuban pastors at a printer's shop and obtaining the unexpected religious visas. 'Do you think the Lord will not bring us the rest of the way?' he asked me. He was right; although our way might be tried, it would be to show our dependence upon Him. The Lord would make all things well!

A half hour later our contact arrived, along with his wife. He spoke briefly to the immigration officials, who waved us on after taking no more than a passing glance at our passports and the visa documents our friend had brought with him. This kind friend brought us out of the empty airport to begin what would be an unforgettable opportunity to share God's Word and the work of the Society with the Cuban churches.

After spending a short night at a flat he had rented in Havana for the four of us, we purchased bottled water and other supplies until the small car's trunk barely closed. The rest of the supplies for the trip went on our laps, and for the next two weeks we travelled 2,300 kilometres (1,430 miles), visiting fifteen churches or small groups of

pastors and seminary students from one end of the island to the other, presenting the work of the Society and distributing thousands of Scripture items that had been printed on the small, clandestine Cuban printing press we had first heard about in the USA.

Cuba's religion

Cuba is a country that has no national religion. Unlike most other Latin American countries, where Roman Catholicism is predominant and widely practiced, while about half of Cuba's population purports to be Roman Catholic very few of these people are practising Roman Catholics. The few vestiges of Roman Catholicism in Cuba are seen in some of the old cathedrals built well before the country's Communist revolution in 1959. In fact, some of these buildings are now being used by members of the country's only recognised Protestant denomination—a loosely knit group made up of Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals and other smaller denominations that,

together, make up the officially recognised Protestant church in Cuba. Only this group is permitted to import a few Bibles, and only members of this group make up Cuba's Religious Council which decides, among many other things, who may receive a religious visa.

However, below the surface, as it were, is a burgeoning interest and growth in the doctrines of grace and biblical Christianity, and along with that a palpable and evident hunger for the Word of God. Only a few years ago Cuba opened up (limited) internet access to its citizens, and this has had a most remarkable effect on the Christian church in Cuba. Many of the churches belonging to the official government Protestant church are abandoning some of the unbiblical practices and beliefs held by the state church, and small churches are forming all over the country, many of them simply meeting in homes. All across the land we heard





the question, 'But what does the Bible teach about this or that doctrine?'

Very few people in Cuba own a Bible, and many pastors do not even have their own copy of God's Word. Here again, however, the government's recent relaxing of the rules concerning internet has, in perhaps an unexpected manner, made the Word of God available to millions who do not own a printed Bible. A large percentage of the country's youth has begun reading God's Word daily, and while there is a great need for sound Christian books for further instruction the most pressing need of the Christian church is to have more Bibles.

In God's amazing providence, a door has been opened whereby the Society now regularly prints—via the little clandestine press in Cuba—the Gospel according to John, Scripture calendars, Scripture leaflets and articles that teach the doctrines of the inspiration and preservation of God's Holy Word. Just prior to this writing, our contact

in Cuba printed 90,000 Scripture leaflets, 25,000 copies of the Gospel according to John, 10,000 Golden Thoughts Scripture calendars, and 4,000 each of three core articles regarding the doctrine of Scripture and its preservation.

Two weeks of teaching and speaking

During the two weeks we were in Cuba, Monday through Saturday of each week were spent speaking to small groups of pastors, seminary students, elders or simply interested men and women who desired to hear about the Word of God and the Spanish Bible revision the Society is carrying out. Many pastors and seminary students we met had never heard of the Greek Received Text underlying the New Testament, and in the words of our contact and guide on the trip, our presentations 'shook the island to its core' when they heard that the Critical Text underlying some of the modern Spanish Bible translations

appearing in Cuba actually does harm to the doctrine of the Deity of Christ. Many of our presentations were planned ahead of time, but an equal number were spontaneous, in that Christians from one town heard that we were speaking and begged that we come to their town and bring the information to them as well. By the end of the fourteen days I was exhausted but exhilarated, never having seen such an extraordinary show of interest in the work of the Society, and more importantly such a keen desire to learn more about God's Word.

This interest in the Bible and biblical doctrines was not limited to the churches or homes where we spoke, however. It would be impossible to describe in a brief article the many encounters we had with people who showed a fervent desire to learn more about the biblical doctrines concerning salvation. This was particularly so among the younger generation who are more adept at the use of the cheap, Chinese mobile phones that are found everywhere. I will never forget being served breakfast at a hostel in Santa Clara, an old colonial city about halfway along Highway 1 (there is only one highway on the island) between Havana in the west

and Baracoa in the east. Our contact, his wife, my colleague and I had just finished praying for our meal when the waiter, a young man of about twenty years old, timidly approached our table and asked if we were Christians. His next question was not exactly what I would have expected from a person of his young years. He asked us which doctrine regarding the secret will of God was correct, that of 'supralapsarianism' or 'infralapsarianism'. As can be imagined, the question made for an interesting breakfast conversation with our waiter!

The example of this young man's questions is a microcosm of the growing Christian church in Cuba. While officially there is still only one legal Protestant church, there are many denominations that are growing rapidly, and large Baptist and Presbyterian seminaries are being built in some cities. It would appear that the government is growing more tolerant of these groups, since only a few years ago such buildings would have been torn down by the authorities. Of course, many of these people are new to the Gospel and its message and they have need of much teaching. We would encourage you to pray for the Lord's work in Cuba, that this land of material poverty may prove to contain spiritual riches through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit, convicting of sin and pointing the way to the Lord Jesus as the only Mediator between God and man.

A small book could easily be written containing the many encouraging and at times curious experiences we had in Cuba. Havana, the large, old capital city on the western coast, is surprisingly cosmopolitan with areas that are kept up beautifully to receive the country's many tourists who provide it with its primary source of income. Once one leaves Havana, the landscape opens up to broad swaths of rolling, palm-lined hills with a single paved highway that crosses the island from Havana in the west to the country's eastern coast 1,200 kilometres (745 miles) away.

Public transportation is scarce outside of the larger cities, and we saw many people using horse-drawn carriages or bicycle taxis—small carts hitched to bicycles—whereby the people could get around and the bicycle driver could eke out a small living. There are very few cars, and many of the cars in use are from the 1950s, when



that day. However, just before arriving in Santa Clara, the car's motor gave out and smoke poured from under the hood as the red-hot pistons nearly caught fire. I was more than a little alarmed, since this was a rental car, and I wondered how we would get ourselves out of this situation. 'Not to worry', said my calm guide. He called the rental car company, and within an hour



automobiles were still being imported from the US. The Cuban people have a unique way of fixing just about anything, and I felt safer in some of the seventy-year-old jalopies than I did in our rental car. Our contact acted as my copilot, and at one point I mentioned to him that the car's oil light was on and that I could hear the unmistakable clatter of pistons that needed oil! 'There is no oil in Cuba', was his reply, and he urged me to pick up my speed, since we still had two presentations to give



they brought us a replacement car—a late model Renault—and apologised profusely for the engine problems we had. Wishing to be forthright, I told the man who brought us the car that the motor had run out of oil, and his response was the same as my guide's, 'There is no oil in Cuba'!

As in most developing countries, jobs and opportunities are more readily available in the city, and as we drove further east, we saw more and more abject poverty.



In spite of this there is a resilient, cheerful spirit that is predominant in Cuba, and on so many occasions my colleague and I were humbled by the evident happiness and contentment these poor people showed despite living with shortages of almost everything—food, electricity, drinking water and employment. On more than one instance the following Scripture passage came to mind: 'But godliness with contentment is great gain' (1 Timothy 6.6). In one such instance an elderly woman offered us a cup of tea in her home but

apologised that she had no biscuits. Her eyes lit up, however, and she said, 'I have something better than biscuits!' What could that be, we wondered? She brought us into her bedroom, where she pointed to a framed TBS poster, brought to her years ago by a friend from Canada, that said, 'For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6.23). One does not quickly forget such moments!

We left Cuba convinced that the Lord is working in that island in a powerful way. Please pray that further doors may be opened in Cuba, so that the Society may be permitted to send the Spanish Scriptures to those who have shown such a hunger for them. We who have such ready access to the Scriptures are so prone to taking them for granted! Pray that the Lord may continue to provide the resources for the Society to continue to print the Scripture portions in the little printing press in Cuba, and that it may be seen in the great Day of days that the Word may '... bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred' (Mark 4.20).

For information and scenes of our distribution in Cuba and other countries see www.tbsbibles.org/news/473397/New-Video-Distributing-the-Word-of-God.htm



Cuba's lush rural landscape



The Treasury

From **David J. Broome**
Resources Director

Having written the introduction to this QR I have confined my comments to practical matters in this article.

The past twelve months have been very challenging for the Society due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For much of that period most of the staff at our Headquarters in London have been working at home full-time, which has been very challenging in itself, and we thank them all. We are also very thankful to our Warehouse staff for remaining on site and continuing to keep the Scriptures flowing out of William Tyndale House. Apart from the obvious disruption in Deputation meetings, our operations have continued largely unhindered, and through the Lord's great mercy although a few UK staff and their families have had the virus none have been seriously ill. We have much to thank the Lord for!

The Society's Strategic Review continues gradually, and over recent months we have completed the Staffing Review. At the time of writing we are in the process

of consolidating all the findings from the Review into a useable summary, on the way to developing a Strategic Plan for the Society. We hope to share this with the Society's members later this year, if the Lord will. As part of this, before too much longer we hope to be in a position to advertise the post of General Secretary, prayerfully trusting that the Lord has been preparing and equipping the Society's next executive leader to take up the reins.

The Society in London ended the year in a much better position financially than we could have thought possible at the start of the pandemic, when there seemed to be so much uncertainty (including financial). We are deeply thankful to the Lord for this situation. We hope to report on the financial results for 2020 in detail in *Quarterly Record* no. 636 to be published in the summer of 2021.

However, the maintenance of a financial position close to the 2020 Budget does not mean that the Society has no longer-term financial challenges. In December

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2020 the General Committee approved a Financial Plan for 2021–2025; if the Society is to reach its target of a balanced General Fund budget—including adherence to its policy to use legacy income (which is one-off by its very nature) for ‘one-off or easily controllable expenditure’ only, particularly the free granting of the Scriptures—this will include significant challenges and potential cuts in the later years of that period. Please pray that the Lord will continue to provide for the Society’s financial needs as He has done for the past 190 years, during which time there were moments when it was thought the Society would have to close down due to lack of money. But the Lord was and continues to be faithful.

The project for the replacement of the Society’s financial system with a new one

called Xledger was mentioned in QR633 (October to December 2020). Xledger was implemented for core processes in London on 1 October 2020. We continue to increase and improve our use of the system, but we are already seeing some major operational benefits in relation to financial processing and reporting. We are just commencing a project to roll the system out to most of our overseas branches during 2021, if the Lord will.

We remain deeply thankful to all the Society’s members and supporters who uphold us in prayer and give practically to the work (Hebrews 6.10).

‘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).





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 Romania

Greeting from Romania!

I hope it's not too late to bring to you and to your organization our thanks for the help you gave us in our 2020 winter mission season. We received the 2021 Romanian calendars in time in order to distribute them during our Evangelical Mission done in the following locations: Adjud, Bacau, Burcioaia, Bursuceni, Comanesti, Focsani, Horgesti, Ipotesti Suceava, Onesti, Pascani,



Piatra Neamt, Racatau, Radacinesti, Roman, Satu Nou, Tg Neamt, and Targu Ocna. Praise the Lord, during the Covid-19 epidemic situation, with God's help we could spread the Word of God.



Young people with Romanian Bibles



From Wessex, England, to our distributor in Romania

Please could you take five Bibles out of your stock and grant them, if possible, to children or young people who need them. These are paid for by our Wessex Auxiliary as a result of children nominating their quiz prizes for this purpose.

From Northern Ireland

Greetings to you again at TBS from a very wet Co Fermanagh! I have some news to pass on to you regarding some more of my contacts receiving TBS literature in various different places both at home and abroad. Please share this information as you wish with others, and particularly staff for their encouragement in the work they do in translating, printing and sending of Scripture literature in many languages. These calendars and Bibles were passed on

to a contact who lives in Co Fermanagh and has many contacts in rural areas both in Fermanagh and neighbouring counties. He works long hours six days a week and hasn't too much time to search on the internet for his literature needs and he asked me to place these orders on his behalf. He is sincerely thankful to receive this literature as he found it very hard this year to obtain literature elsewhere due to so many lockdowns and business closures which meant he had major difficulties obtaining Scripture literature from his normal sources. The order included Albanian, Persian, Russian and English Words of Life Calendars.

The recipient from Athens wrote: I want to tell you that I received some weeks now from Trinitarian Bible society from England a box with calendars in Farsi, English and Albanian and two New Testaments in Farsi and two copies of Gospel according to John in Bulgarian. Thank you very much for this offering and I will give to our ministry that work with the refugees. I don't know if you have other languages from what I asked you but thank you for the calendars and the languages that we already have received. As I remember and I think I sent you a message before that I also received 50 Russian calendars.

The recipient in Bulgaria wrote: Regarding Bulgarian Gospels according to John thank you so much for your prayer and your encouragement. I think it is a brilliant idea to order forty John Gospels, a fantastic investment into the folk we live around, what a generous offer, thank you! We have been praying about who to give the Gospels to as we don't want them sitting on someone's shelf!! So we gave one to Tsveti this morning! She looked preoccupied! She had been with her brother yesterday who is 81 and is poorly! I gave her a Gospel, I don't know where any

of them stand with the Lord!! This would be absolutely beautiful if she started reading the Gospel to her brother! I told her that my brother used to read it every day to my father when he was dying!

The recipient who works amongst Seafarers in Cork Harbour, Republic of Ireland wrote regarding the Chinese Words of Life calendars 2021: Thanks again so much for your great help and practical support of our ministry. I can imagine some seafarer somewhere out on the High Seas looking at the lovely calendar you gave and reading the Scriptures. May each calendar plant seeds into the hearts and minds of many seafarers.

The recipient of Russian Words of Life Calendars 2021 wrote: As always I am encouraged and blessed by you. I praise the Lord for you and your faithful support as well as working together with you as a team for God's Kingdom. Thanks for the calendars. These days I meet many Christian seafarers who long for worshipping as a church on board. Thankfully I can travel to the port as I am considered as an essential worker. Please pray for God's protection from the virus so that I might not spread it to seamen. If it happened, the ministry in the port might be finished. Thanks again and God bless.

The recipient of Hungarian Words of Life Calendars 2021 wrote: You are very kind to care about sending the calendar to us. Although we are in the second wave of the pandemic, personal meetings, in most cases, have not been banned by the government. So we can still meet the children and the supporters, and give them this valuable gift. We appreciate 400 or 500 copies of the calendar. May God bless your life and ministry.

The recipient who has a ministry to seafarers in Belfast Harbour Port received

English, Russian, and Romanian Words of Life calendars 2021 and English Bookmarks and Gospels according to John in Russian and Romanian. He wrote: I just want to let you know that I received the Calendars and some reading materials that you sent me, thank you very much for your generosity. May the Lord bless you more and I know many of the seafarers will be touched and will experience God's love through your life. Thank you again and God bless.

The recipient in France wrote: Thanks for the verses and advice concerning the calendars. Some of the calendars are already gone. This past Sunday, a French lady named Isabelle was at our presentation service and she gratefully accepted one calendar. We are praying for her salvation. During our prayer meeting yesterday, one of our recently baptized sisters in Christ witnessed concerning the joy of her neighbour (an elderly woman) when she received the calendar. The calendars are being used. Thank you for your prayers.



Africa



From Malawi via the Free Grace Evangelistic Association

The latest distribution of granted KJV Bibles and Chichewa New Testaments in Malawi is very encouraging and is of the Lord's mercies. This is a new area for Free Grace Evangelistic Association distribution. It is right at the southernmost tip of Malawi, by the Mozambique border. FGEA received a request to make this distribution from a Canadian lady (who has a Malawian husband with family in southern Malawi),



after she had seen the reports from TBS on the Chichewa project.

From Sierra Leone via Missionswerk Voice of Hope

We are delighted to inform you that the consignment of 4,000 English Bibles and 3,049 Words of Life Calendars arrived in Bo, Sierra Leone in the evening of 24 November. On behalf of all Voice of Hope staff, I would like to thank you very much for this magnificent gift! May the Lord through His Word work mightily in the hearts of the recipients. God willing, we will report more about this after some time of ministry and hope to give some personal testimonies. Thank you once again. May God reward you richly!

India

From Thadou

We rejoice that 11,000 copies of the Bible and 20,000 copies of a large print edition of the New Testament arrived at

a large Indian seaport after close to three months in transit from the USA where they were printed. We praise God to be able to distribute these Scriptures and look forward to having TBS people join us after the pandemic for more rejoicing.



Social Media



From Facebook

When I was young, I used to hate your Scripture posters; but as I got older and my attitudes were changed, I have grown to love them. They are effective, because His Word will not return void.

Meetings Update

As we are now coming out of lockdown, please be sure to check our website (www.tbsbibles.org/page/branch#events/event_list.asp) for forthcoming meetings.



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The aims of the Society

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

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

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

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

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

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



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